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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Cioflâncă, A. (2010). The communist propagandistic model: towards a cultural genealogy. *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review*, 10(3), 447-482. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-446622>

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The Communist Propagandistic Model Towards A Cultural Genealogy*

ADRIAN CIOFLÂNCĂ

The communist state is often labeled by scholars a "propaganda-state"¹. The explanation for this stays with the prevailing role of mass communication and indoctrination, which constantly defined the relation between the regime and the society at large. The communist regime granted propaganda a central position, thus turning it into a valuable mean to achieve radical ends: the total transformation of the society and the creation of a "new man". Consequently, massive, baroque, arborescent propaganda outfits were institutionally developed. Furthermore, the verbalization of ideology became a free-standing profession for millions of people all over Eastern Europe². In other words, the communist political culture turned the propaganda effort consubstantial with the act of governing, with the results of the latest being often judged from the standpoint of the propagandistic performances. The inevitable conclusion to this way of reasoning would be that the collapse of communism resides with the propaganda failure to bring forth the projected changes. In fact, several studies published before 1989, while noticing the non-attractive redundancy of the communist propaganda message, the absence of its persuasive subtlety, the severe contrast with the reality it claimed to reflect, as well as the inert, cumbersome massiveness of the propagandistic apparatus, pointed out the inefficiency of the communist mass communication when measuring the significant distance between the assigned role and the actual impact³.

Following this, a legitimate question would be: why the communist regime, though it allocated massive resources to the propagandistic outfit, did not try to refine its propaganda in order to increase its persuasive impact and to enhance its adaptability to necessities? The first possible answer is that, in fact, the propaganda

*The documentation for this paper was mainly made during a research training period at the Central European University (Hungary) sponsored in 2004 by Europa Institut Budapest.

¹ Peter KENEZ, *The Birth of the Propaganda State. Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization. 1917-1929*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985.

² We should state from the very beginning that I owe the approaching model used in this paper to David Wedgood BENN's comprehensive work, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989. Benn called the attention upon the intellectual sources that influenced the communists' mass communication manner and moved the focus, in propaganda analysis, from the content of the message and the apparatus meant to propagate it, upon the functions played by propaganda within the communist system.

³ See, for instance, David Wedgood BENN, "New Thinking in Soviet Propaganda", *Soviet Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, July 1969, pp. 52-63; Stephen WHITE, "The Effectiveness of Political Propaganda in USSR", *Soviet Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, July 1980, pp. 323-348; for Romania's case, see Daniel N. NELSON, *Romanian Politics in the Ceaușescu Era*, Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, New York, London, 1988, *passim*.

tried to modernize itself¹, its improvement being one obsessive preoccupation of the communists, but the results had always been modest. Second, the communist propaganda was structurally fixed in a cultural and political model that prescribed the very characteristics we have mentioned. Third, the propaganda was endowed, besides its communicative function that we customarily take into consideration, with two other, even more important functions, for which its brutal aspect was the appropriate one: that of stimulating terror by exhibiting the power's discretionary character (which could flagrantly lie, without being contradicted), as well as that of exerting, together with other key-factors of the regime, the social control.

The present study, which aims at explaining why the communist propaganda remained unattractive, unwieldy, and unadoptable to the very end, takes the above considerations as possible working hypothesis. However, one should bear in mind that such critical evaluations do not belong to the communist officials, who never departed and or criticized the propaganda role model imagined by the doctrinaires of Marxism-Leninism. It is that model I shall dwell upon further on while inventorying the cultural and political sources that contributed to its formation.

The type of mass communication practiced under communism was forged during the first three decades of the soviet regime, and relied heavily on 19th century and early 20th century presumptions on human nature, state, and society, that were latter on internalized by the "classics" of the Marxism-Leninism. Therefore I will start by making an inventory of Karl Marx', V.I. Lenin's and I.V. Stalin's statements on propaganda or related themes. Further, when considering that the ideological orthodoxy played an essential role in the functioning of the communist regimes, and that the soviet officials simply picked up, institutionalized and turned into unquestionable realities the postulates of the classics, my aim is to explain why the propaganda model created during the Leninist and Stalinist period was perpetuated to the end of the regime. The unquestionable loyalty to the ideological canon, political and academic parochialism, and the general inertia of the regime in the Soviet Union will make my special attention. They will also help me explain why, with the domination of the Soviet Union upon Eastern Europe, and the export of the soviet mass communication role model all over the communist camp, beyond the significant differences existing among countries, growing deeper in the 1980s, the resemblances were far more numerous and more important.

The "classics" of communism had few original and useful contributions in the field of communication, as none of the communist ideologists developed a systematic theory about mass communication and, implicitly, about propaganda. Yet, they influenced the working of the propaganda apparatus through the implications of the ideologically postulated "truths". Some of the most important such "truths", which were transformed into principles of organization of the soviet propaganda system, will come under scrutiny in the followings.

¹ Ellen MICKIEVICZ, "The Modernization of Party Propaganda in the USSR", *Slavic Review*, vol. 30, no. 2, June 1971, pp. 257-276; for Romania, see Eugen DENIZE, Cezar MĂȚĂ, *România comunistă. Statul și propaganda, 1948-1953*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2005.

Determinism and Voluntarism

To the founders of the Soviet state the writings of both Marx and Engels were rather worthless in terms of procedural indications to be used in the effort to build an almighty propagandistic apparatus. The Marxist proselytes had hardly found a few quotations in the works of the two forefathers that would refer in practical terms to language¹ and conversion methods². Moreover, some of the identified elements could not even be cited. For instance, in his first political article, Marx was virulently criticizing censorship³. Marx wished to be a scientist and loathed practical issues⁴. Joining the other important figures of the 19th century, who submitted scientist philosophies of change (A. Comte, J.-B. Lamarck, Ch. Darwin, etc.⁵), Marx stated that his role was not that of inducing change, but rather that of prophesying and explaining it. In his works, science was endowed with a revolutionary function, as the scientific and technological progress automatically brought about the society's radical transformation. Polemicizing with competing standpoints on the idea of revolution, mainly with L.-A. Blanqui's "putschism" and M. Bakunin's "elitism"⁶, Marx asserted that the revolution does not depend on the will of some charismatic revolutionary or that of an utopian dreamer, but on the development of the society at large, and of the economy in particular⁷. Imagining the revolution as a volcano eruption, as a natural calamity that ineluctably "occurs" and "bursts"⁸, Marx was more preoccupied by the fact that he would not finish his work before the great event starts. In 1857, he writes to Engels:

"I am working madly, through the nights on a synthesis of my economic studies, so that before the deluge I shall at least have the main outlines clear"⁹.

¹ See Georges MOUNIN, *Istoria lingvisticii*, Rom. transl. C. Dominte, Paideia, București, 1999, chapter "Marxism și lingvistică", pp. 305-322.

² The main "conversion method" provided by Marx was education; see Wolfgang LEONHARD, *Three Faces of Marxism. The Political Concepts of Soviet Ideology, Maoism and Humanist Marxism*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, Chicago and San Francisco, 1974, p. 40.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁴ As far as it seems, the proletariat's prophet had never entered a spinning mill, a factory, a mine or any other work place in industry. See Paul JOHNSON, *Intelectualii*, Rom. transl. Luana Stoica, Humanitas, București, 1999, p. 96.

⁵ K.R. POPPER, *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei*, vol. II (*Epoca marilor profeti: Hegel și Marx*), Rom. transl. D. Stoianovici, Humanitas, București, 1993, p. 231.

⁶ For the anarchist theories of the revolution, see Jean PRÉPOSIET, *Istoria anarhismului*, Rom. transl. Adrian Moșoianu, Editura Lider/Sirius, București, 2006.

⁷ Saul K. PADOVER, *Karl Marx. An Intimate Biography* (Abridged edition), New American Library, New York, 1980, pp. 234 seq.; Sidney HOOK, "Myth and Fact in the Marxist Theory of Revolution and Violence", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 34, no. 2, April-June 1973, pp. 271-280.

⁸ Robert C. TUCKER, "The Marxian Revolutionary Idea", in Clifford T. PAYTON, Robert BLACKKEY (eds.), *Why Revolution? Theories and Analyses*, Schenkman Publishing Company Inc., Cambridge, London, 1971, p. 215; IDEM, *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea*, The Norton Library, New York, 1969; for a presentation and criticism of the "volcanic" model of the revolution, see Rod AYA, *Rethinking Revolution and Collective Violence. Studies on Concept, Theory and Method*, Het Spinhuis, Amsterdam, 1990, pp. 22-23, *passim*.

⁹ Karl MARX, Friedrich ENGELS, *Opere*, vol. 29, București, Editura Politică, 1968, p. 205.

The revolution was seen as a fatality, as a process in which people were caught regardless of their will, and radically transformed by their mere participation. Consequently, Marx did not feel the need to offer procedural information, so useful to the professionals of 1917, regarding the way in which the world could be determined to engage in a radical change. Wishing to participate in the "battle of knowledge" started with the Enlightenment, who stated that a theory, in order to have a firm epistemic authority, had to acquire the status of science¹, Marx presented Marxism as a science. Consequently, stating indubitable truths, Marxism felt no need to get the overwhelming approval for the veracity of its assertions. The cogency of Marxism, it was said, lies in its truth, which is not necessarily obvious, but once it is revealed, it stands out. Marx, like most positivists, rejected psychologism, that is, he did not believe that the value of truth was ensured by the being's inner sources.

"Do we really need a special perspicuity [Marx and Engels wonder in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*] to understand that when the people's life conditions, their social relationships, their social existence change, then their representations, conceptions and notions, in a word their consciousness, change too?"².

In other words, knowledge is socially conditioned, and it is only possible through socialization, with Marxism asserting itself as a materialist and collectivist rationalism³. For Marx, the social reality, an expression of the material conditions of existence, represented a structure that determines the forms of the thought, that is superstructure. More precisely, his intention was to confer elasticity to the relations between different constitutive levels of the human reality, each one's foundation having the capacity to be a superstructure for the foundation of yet another. Thus, the political life was based on the social life, which in its turn leant upon the economic life, which was also based on the relations of production, depending on their turn on the productive forces existing at a given time⁴. These nuances were diluted by the Marxist vulgate, as the epigones had not always clearly delimited which was the society's status, that of structure or that of superstructure, and which were its relations to the superstructure represented by the world of ideas. The soviet practitioners did not know for sure whether propaganda was totally licit from the Marxist standpoint, whether theory allowed them to assert that the ideas transmitted by the agency of propaganda could influence the society, especially when this one did not reach the degree of material development that could allow it to understand, to have access to progressive ideas.

¹ Michel FOUCAULT, "*Trebuie să apărăm societatea*". *Cursuri rostite la College de France (1975-1976)*, Rom. transl. Bogdan Ghiu, Editura Univers, București, 2000, pp. 180 sqq.

² Karl MARX, Friedrich ENGELS, *Manifestul Partidului Comunist*, București, Nemira, 1998, p. 30.

³ K.R. POPPER, *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei...*cit., pp. 101, 232, 246; Jonathan DANCY, Ernest SOSA (eds.), *Dicționar de filosofia cunoașterii*, vol. II, Rom. transl. Gheorghe Ștefanov et alii, Editura Trei, București, 1999, p. 101.

⁴ Jacques d'HONDT, "Filosofia lui Marx și Engels", in Jacqueline RUSS (coord.), *Istoria filosofiei*, vol. III (*Triumful rațiunii*), Rom. transl. L. Kerestesz, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, București, 2000, pp. 198-199.

The Marxist theory of knowledge, though dominated by materialism and social determinism, had a voluntaristic side, which was exploited by the Soviet ideologists¹. Marxism replaced the abstract, contemplative self from the classical epistemology with a subject located in history and engaged into an active relationship with the natural and social environment. This "activist" theory (K.R. Popper) of knowledge insisted on the importance of praxis (under the form of work or revolutionary activity), which, besides the fact that it was indicated as a modality to validate knowledge, was endowed with the ability to change the world². Marx believed, together with several contemporary authors of social engineering, in the human being's radical malleability and rational nature³, thus opening the way to the "new man" theory and fueling the faith into the meliorist power of propaganda. To Marxist anthropology, man could become emancipated; he could get rid of the "false consciousness" and "alienation" through work, revolutionary activity and education⁴. It is this transformative perspective that inspired the Leninist voluntarism, in order to exceed the difficulties raised by the materialist determinism and to precipitate the arrival of communism. In Marxism, transformation is based upon a reasoning of transformation. Just like in the case of Lamarck, Darwin or H. Spencer, Marx placed the idea of struggle at the core of his theory⁵. The class struggle, seen as an engine of history, prescribed the social relations in the form of unavoidable and irreconcilable confrontation. Moreover, the Marxist revolutionary theory included the prophecy of violence as unavoidable in the process of change⁶. The traditional idea of politics, in the Aristotelian perspective, aiming at the pacification and accommodation of the tendencies opposite to the community-state, for which social peace represented the natural state, was replaced with the war-politics, of Hobbesian origin, including as a mandatory stage a radically divided society, which was to reach peace again only when one of the camps would have been defeated. This vision, translated into practice, had dramatic effects upon the communist states, where politics took the form of a genuine civil war. Subsequently, propaganda was conceived as a fighting instrument, which had to be used in order to defeat the adversary, to eradicate his conceptions⁷.

¹ Philippe BRAUD, François BURDEAU, *Histoire des idées politiques depuis la Révolution*, Éditions Montchrestien, Paris, 1983, pp. 356-357.

² Jonathan DANCY, Ernest SOSA (eds.), *Dictionar de filosofia cunoașterii*, cit., pp. 99-101; Wolfgang H. PLEGER, "Hegelianismul de stânga", in Ferdinand FELLMAN (ed.), *Istoria filosofiei în secolul al XIX-lea*, Rom. transl. Emil Bădici et alii, Editura ALL, București, 2000, p. 156.

³ Jacques d'HONDT, "Filosofia lui Marx și Engels", cit.

⁴ Terence BALL, Richard DAGGER, *Ideologii politice și idealul democratic*, Rom. transl. coordinated by Vasile Boari, Polirom, Iași, 2000, p. 153, *passim*. In a famous outburst, Marx exclaimed that he does not acknowledge himself as a Marxist if his materialism is interpreted in a simplistic way. "The Marxist theory, he wrote, that states that people are the product of circumstances or education and that consequently, people change due to new circumstances and new education, forgets that circumstances too are changed by people and that the educator himself needs to be educated." (see Karl MARX, Friedrich ENGELS, *Despre educație și învățământ*, Editura de Stat Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1960, p. 105; the English translation of the fragment (as well as of the fragments below) is made based on the quoted Romanian edition).

⁵ Charles-Henry CUIN, François GRESLE, *Istoria sociologiei*, Rom. transl. Ion I. Ionescu, Institutul European, Iași, 2000, p. 79.

⁶ Karl MARX, Friedrich ENGELS, *Manifestul Partidului Comunist*, cit., p. 31; Marcel PRÉLOT, Georges LESCUYER, *Histoire des idées politiques*, 11^e édition, Éditions Dalloz, Paris, 1992, p. 476.

⁷ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., p. 56.

Marxist works had an implicit effect upon the propaganda style. Besides the fact that it was impregnated by the logic of violence, confrontation and intransigence, propaganda was also influenced by Marx' apodictic way of asserting "truths", which was transposed into an authoritarian rhetoric, rather imposing than trying to convince.

With Leninism – which, according to Alain Besançon, was characterized by an "absolute trust in the Marxist analysis"¹ – the theoretical details of Marx' work acquired a practical importance hard to imagine. The ideologists of 1917 cut down in the Marxist writings a revolutionary catechism influenced by all things mentioned above: revolutionary scientism, collectivist rationalism, material and social determinism, knowledge based upon praxis, uncertain status of society, unavoidability of violence, aggressive and authoritarian style.

Lenin was more interested in propaganda than Marx was for one simple reason: the proletarian revolution, left in charge of social determinism, was taking too long to start. As everybody knows, from the Marxist point of view, Russia was, given its structural data, far from representing the ideal country, where a proletarian revolution would "naturally" start. Marx treated with sarcasm the idea, quite circulated at his time, that Russia might be the starting point for the world revolution. To him, Russia, with his scarce industry, weak bourgeoisie and proletariat, and low level of education could not fulfill the basic requirements. Marx repeatedly warned his Russian friends not to mechanically apply his model of revolution to Russia², which to his eyes was part of the Orient and not the West³, and thus characterized by oriental despotism, barbarianism, patriarchy and so on. Thus, in Russia, a revolution against the tsarist autocracy could occur at best, but not a proletarian, communist, revolution⁴.

Lenin borrowed, almost until the Revolution started, an important part of the Marxist reading of Russia, including the orientalized language and the lack of trust in Russia and even in the Russian proletariat. He had noticed that the Russian workers did not have a revolutionary behavior, that they were too little concerned with ideology and that they were inclined to "spontaneously" direct themselves towards their private interests⁵. The distrust in the proletariat, in the society in general, would enhance in the years to come, as his belief that a change had to be operated in the Marxist revolutionary theory to fight the "naïve fatalism" grew stronger. As a result, in his case, the focus is placed on voluntarism, hardly suggested in Marxism – reaching the idea that the revolution cannot burst by itself, but must be provoked, organized and led by a revolutionary minority and charismatic vanguard, mastering an ultimate

¹ Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale ale leninismului*, Rom. transl. Lucreția Văcar, Humanitas, București, 1993, p. 196.

² Karl A. WITTFOGEL, "The Russian View of Russian Society and Revolution", *World Politics*, vol. 12, no. 4, July 1960, pp. 487-508; Henry EATON, "Marx and the Russians", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 41, no. 1, January-Mars 1980, pp. 89-112.

³ For an analysis of the Marxist Orientalism, see Edward W. SAID's classical work, *Orientalism. Conceptiile occidentale despre Orient*, Rom. transl. A. Andreescu, D. Lică, Amarcord, Timișoara, 2001, pp. 163 sqq., *passim*.

⁴ Karl A. WITTFOGEL, "The Russian View of Russian Society...cit.". This part of the Marxist writings, inconvenient for the Russian communists, was excluded from translation in the Soviet Union after communism came to power.

⁵ Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale...cit.*, p. 216.

truth¹. *What Is To Be Done?*, published in 1902, synthesizes this new perspective². In this manifesto Lenin says: "...the role of the fighting vanguard can only be played by a party guided by an advanced theory"³. The resemblance with Blanqui's vision was striking, and this is why Lenin was immediately accused by Gh. Plekhanov, K. Kautsky or Rosa Luxemburg of "neo-Blanquism"⁴. The Jacobinic side and the Blanquist inspiration of the Leninist revolutionary conception was the most disputed and difficult subject to dwell upon in the soviet historiography⁵.

Understanding that he does not have at his disposal a conscious, articulate maneuvering mass, one he could use in the announced revolution, Lenin, impressed by the Narodnik agitprop and learning the recipe of success offered by the radical Wilhelm Liebknecht ("studieren, propagandieren, organisieren")⁶, insisted on the fact that propaganda as a *form of education* and *occasion for organization* is a necessary condition for the success and solidity of a revolution. These two associations – between propaganda and education (as an antidote to the "false consciousness") and between propaganda and organization (as an antidote to "spontaneity") – will be essential for the future of the communist state.

"Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement"⁷, Lenin proclaimed, adding that the theory should be brought to the eyes of the proletariat and the other classes in order to become efficient. How precisely this theory was to be transmitted is an issue that Lenin, just like Marx, did not detail, though he devoted tens of pages of his writings to propaganda. The Bolshevik leader talked more about the necessity of propaganda and left less space to practicalities⁸. His revolutionarism was, after all, a strategy to win power⁹, and most of the Leninist writings dealt with this phase, being less useful after the revolution (although, as it is well-known, the Soviet leading manner was marked by the conspiracy perspective and the ante-revolutionary sectarianism). Lenin borrowed from Plekhanov the distinction between agitation (the presentation of a few simple ideas in front of a great number of persons, which should lead to immediate action) and propaganda (the presentation of several complex ideas in front of smaller collectives, with a good ideological training and who, in time, could act on their own initiatives)¹⁰. The distinction was institutionalized by the communist regimes, but rather because it had been established by Lenin and

¹ See, at length, James D. WHITE, *Lenin: The Practice and Theory of Revolution*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, 2001; Frances Bennett BECKER, "Lenin's Application of Marx's Theory of Revolutionary Tactics", *American Sociological Review*, vol. 2, no. 3, June 1937, pp. 353-364.

² V.I. LENIN, "Ce-i de făcut?", in *Opere complete*, vol. 6, Editura Politică, București, 1964, pp. 1-190.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

⁴ Philippe BRAUD, François BURDEAU, *Histoire des idées politiques depuis la Révolution*, cit., p. 418.

⁵ See Jonathan FRANKEL's excellent article "Party Genealogy and the Soviet Historians (1920-1938)", *Slavic Review*, vol. 25, no. 4, December 1966, pp. 563-603.

⁶ Marcel PRÉLOT, Georges LESCUYER, *Histoire des idées politiques*, cit., p. 487.

⁷ V.I. LENIN, "Ce-i de făcut?", cit., p. 23.

⁸ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., p. 57.

⁹ For details, see Michel-Louis ROUQUETTE, *Despre cunoașterea maselor. Eșeu de psihologie politică*, Rom. transl. Raluca Popescu and Radu Gârmacea, Polirom, Iași, 2002, pp. 106-111.

¹⁰ V.I. LENIN, "Un pas înainte, doi pași înapoi", in *Opere complete*, vol. 8, Editura Politică, București, 1965, p. 252; Peter KENEZ, *The Birth of the Propaganda State...cit.*, pp. 7-8; David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., p. 58.

less due to some practical utility. At a closer watch, one can notice that the terms were interchangeably used by the professionals of propaganda, with no differentiated alteration of the communication manner and style.

The shortage of information about the techniques of propaganda in the Leninist thought makes us believe that Lenin's influence upon the propagandistic system was minor. Yet, his influence was enormous, as during his lifetime, when he started the construction of the apparatus of mass-communication, a "tradition" was created within the system. I therefore state that certain traits of the Leninist perspective, most of them common to Marxism as well, endowed the communist propaganda with its specificity. One of them, which I have mentioned above and which I shall resume here, was the lack of interest for sophisticated techniques of communication and psychological manipulation. For that purpose I must explain why both Marx and Lenin equated ideology with *science* and propaganda with *education*. Lenin shared the Marxist belief according to which the power of ideology resided within its truth, not in the manner of communication, and/or in some form of manipulation, of "demagogy", as the Bolshevik leader put it. In his public discourses, Lenin did not aim at impressing by eloquence, by rhetoric talent, by manipulating intelligence, but by the authority of the scholar who makes demonstrations and brings overwhelming proofs. This is what impressed Stalin when he first met him, the

"irresistible force of Lenin's logic, a little barren one, but which, on the other hand, thoroughly controls the public, electrifies them step by step and then makes them prisoners, as they say, without appeal..."¹.

The Leninist style, influenced by the Russian press of the 1860s (rich but also prolix, clear but also dull²), was fastidious, rich in names, dates, quotations, tropes, aiming at giving the impression of a rigorous argumentative course, of an unbeatable demonstration. Let me also say that, at the moment of the genesis of totalitarian propaganda apparatus, the resort to the label of "science" had become so democratized, that it had entered the land of commercial advertising, consecrating the "genre" of the "scientifically tasted" products. As Hannah Arendt stated, the totalitarian propagandists grasped the utility of this unprecedented form of advertising³, making of their ideology the "scientifically tested" product par excellence.

Propaganda and Education

Between propaganda and education there has always been a mutual and hardly discernable influence. However, on the whole, education was subordinated to the *purpose* of propaganda (spreading and inoculating ideology), while propaganda was influenced by didactic *methods*. The communist doctrinaires believed in the unlimited powers of propaganda as much as of education.

¹ *Apud* Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale...cit.*, p. 198.

² *Ibidem*, p. 185.

³ Hannah ARENDT, *Originile totalitarismului*, Rom. transl. I. Dur and M. Ivănescu, Humanitas, București, 1994, p. 453.

Before 1917, Lenin said, faithful to his theory on the revolution, that the political transformation should precede the cultural development. The Bolshevik leader thought, counter to the German revisionism, that the revolution cannot wait for the gradual transformation of the society through education until the apparition of a new type of humanity that would naturally generate change. The revolution had to be done with the existent human material, which was going to be re-educated afterwards¹.

After he came to power, Lenin became obsessed with the issue of education: between 1917 and 1922, he uttered 273 discourses on the theme and gave 192 decrees in the field². However, in spite of the increased attention it received, the schooling did not get a specific role in the projects of the new regime. It was just one of the multiple propagators of the "Marxist teaching" (that is how Lenin labeled the work of his ideological master). The 8th Congress of CPSU in 1919 established that schools were going to become vehicles for the transmission of the "principles of communism", and that teachers had to "behave like agents not only of general education, but of communist education as well". In 1921, the Central Committee of CPSU also established that "the main task of the communist party in the field of education [...] is to preserve the communist ideological influence in all of the educative fields"³.

If the finality of education was agreed upon, one can not say the same about the didactic methods taken into consideration. The 1920s were marked by the radical experimentalism, the Soviet Union being the testing ground for many innovatory theories conceived in the West and/or for "revolutionary" communist projects of school re-establishment.

The main source of inspiration was the United States of America, probably because it was as representative for the idea of the "new world". Several theories and methods that seemed to be related to Marxism⁴ were imported from here. John Dewey's educational philosophy received a special attention as Anatoly Lunacharsky, the soviet commissary for Education (1917-1929), was a great admirer of the American philosopher who, in his turn, was, at that time, a sympathizer of communism. In his 1928 famous visit to the Soviet Union, Dewey enthusiastically ascertained that his methods, hardly experienced in the United States, were applied on a wide scale by the Soviet regime⁵. The communists were particularly attracted by Dewey's idea of "learning by doing", as it was pursuant to the Marxist theory of knowledge, focused on the praxis, and was referring to Marx' suggestions regarding the necessity of a

¹ Frederic LILGE, "Lenin and the Politics of Education", *Slavic Review*, vol. 27, no. 2, June 1968, p. 233.

² Eva FOLDES, Joseph SZARKA, "L'éducation en Union Soviétique et dans quelques pays socialistes", in Gaston MIALARET, Jean VIAL (sous la direction de), *Histoire mondiale de l'éducation*, vol. 4 (*De 1945 à nos jours*), PUF, Paris, 1981, p. 22.

³ Larry E. HOLMES, "Bolshevik Utilitarianism and Educational Experimentalism: Party Attitudes and Soviet Educational Practices, 1917-1931", *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 4, Winter 1973, p. 350.

⁴ William W. BRICKMAN, "Some Historical Notes on Russian-American Relations in Culture and Education", *History of Education Journal*, vol. 10, no. 1-4, Tenth Anniversary Issue, 1959, pp. 100-102.

⁵ Alan LAWSON, "John Dewey and the Hope for Reform", *History of Education Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 1, Spring 1975, pp. 31-66; John DEWEY, *Trei scrieri despre educație*, Rom. transl. Ioana Herseni, Viorel Nicolescu, Octavian Oprică, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1977; IDEM, *Democrație și educație*, Rom. transl. Rodica Moșinschi, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 1972.

polytechnic education meant to fabricate the multilateral man¹. Lenin was ambivalent as of the introduction of the polytechnic education, though his own wife, Nadezhda Krupskaya was one of its main advocates. The Bolshevik leader thought that the time had not yet come for the general education in the Soviet Union, confronted with structural problems like illiteracy and lack of specialists. Because of the institutional and economic problems Lenin accepted as a temporary "tactic withdrawal" that schools should return, after a short while during which the polytechnic education had been introduced, to the vocational education, focused on specialization, though it preserved, from the communist perspective, the class differences². All in all, combining the physical effort with the intellectual one, the idea of polytechnic instruction survived the experimentalist decade. Lenin's support against the radicals who were asking for the abolishment of theoretical studies was crucial in this sense. Lenin was pleading – as in his famous discourse, a genuine communist manifesto to the youth, during the 3rd Congress of the Komsomol in 1920 – in favor of the combination between the intellectual education specific to the "old school" (which he surprisingly defended, though partially) and the practical life³. Thus, the premises were created for the institutional connection of the educational system with "production", which will create the specificity of the educational effort in the communist area. Furthermore, as a consequence, the propaganda will be associated with the economic effort and the executive act⁴.

Other "progressive" educational theories experiences in the 1920s were quickly abandoned, yet not before they played their part. For instance, the so-called "child-centered education" (known by the Soviets especially as the Dalton Plan, the "method of complexes" or "method of projects"), supported by the American pedagogue Francis W. Parker, following a series of ideas formulated by Rousseau, Pestalozzi and Dewey, was an important additional element in the communist offensive against the teachers and the "old school". The students, liberated from the constraints of teachers, the family, the schoolbooks, grades, exams, uniforms and so on, succeeded for a while in running schools and purging the teaching staff. The anarchic effects of the "reforms" of the 1920s upon the Soviet educational system are famous⁵.

Starting with the 1930s, the Soviet educational system experiences a return to more traditional forms, with discipline, schoolbooks and uniforms being reintroduced. Yet, the process was only fractional, as part of the didactic methods were changed, and the

¹ It seems that Marx had never explicitly spoken about the "polytechnic education", but the idea was implicit in some of his writings. The theory of the polytechnic education was quite fashionable in the 1920s in Europe and this must have been at least an equally important source of inspiration for the Soviet Union.

² Frederic LILGE, "Lenin and the Politics...cit.", pp. 237 sqq.

³ V.I. LENIN, *Sarcinile Uniunilor Tineretului*, Editura Tineretului, București, 1959.

⁴ Robert C. TUCKER, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia. From Lenin to Gorbachev*, W.W. Norton&Company, New York, London, 1987, p. 56.

⁵ Richard PIPES, *Scurtă istorie a revoluției ruse*, Rom. transl. Cătălin Pârcălabu, Humanitas, București, 1998, pp. 297-302; Larry E. HOLMES, "Bolshevik Utilitarianism...cit.", pp. 349 sqq.; Daniel BEAUVOIS, "Écoles et enseignement dans le monde slave", in Gaston MIALARET, Jean VIAL (sous la direction de), *Histoire mondiale de l'éducation*, vol. 3 (*De 1815 à 1945*), cit., p. 129; "History of Education", in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th edition, vol. 18, Chicago, London, 1993, pp. 55 sqq.

contents of education, above all, were completely modified when compared to what had been studied before 1917 or in contemporary Europe¹.

The one who personifies the decisive change in the 1930s is Anton S. Makarenko, the author of some pedagogic projects adopted by the communist authorities as a model for social engineering. Makarenko, though he had not systematically studied the Marxist and Leninist writings, articulated in his writings and applications the tough issues of the communist political culture; stating that his method was the "usual Soviet one"² was not an exaggeration at all. Denouncing the individualism of the "progressive" pedagogy of the 1920s, the Soviet pedagogue returned to the collectivism of the Marxist gnoseology; disapproving the chaos of the previous decade, he was asking for the reintroduction of organization and discipline, so important in the Leninist thought.

His main contribution concerned education "in and through the collective". In Makarenko's pedagogical perspective, the individual was able to reach a maximal potential only within the collective. He was asking for total submission to collective will, which had the right to control each aspect of individual existence. Insubordination brought forth repression from the others. As Makarenko was a great admirer of military discipline, his kind of collectivity was organized according to the soldiery model, in detachments, submitted to a severe order and led by a committee (Soviet) of commanders. The task was to combine physical work with the intellectual one, in an attentively programmed effort. The aim was to educate the members of the collectivity in respect to a certain set of classic values such as dignity, discipline, respect for work and so on, combined with more revolutionary ones provided by the communist ideology³.

There are similarities between Makarenko's project and the pedagogical models existing at that time in the West – for instance, the projects advanced by Roger Cousinet and Peter Petersen, stressing the educogenous properties of collectivities⁴, or the model proposed by the Lancasterian school, based on quasi-military discipline and the presence of "observers" recruited from within the collectivity, whose role was very likely to the one of the "active" in Makarenko's version⁵.

Most importantly, all of the projects of this kind are deeply rooted in a long utopian tradition, laying at the basis of the scenarios – some of them carried into effect

¹ Mikhail HELLER, *Cogs in the Soviet Wheel. The Formation of Soviet Man*, Collins Harvill, London, 1988, p. 179; Mariana MOMANU, *Educație și ideologie. O analiză pedagogică a sistemului totalitar comunist*, Editura Universității "Al. I. Cuza", Iași, 2005, p. 100.

² A.S. MAKARENKO, *Poemul pedagogic*, Rom. transl. Tamara Schächter and Zoe Bușulenga, Editura de Stat pentru Literatură Științifică și Didactică, București, 1951, p. 367.

³ *Ibidem*, *passim*; Bruce BAKER, "Anton Makarenko and the Idea of the Collective", *Educational Theory*, vol. 18, no. 3, July 1968, pp. 285-294; E. KOUTAISOFF, "Soviet Education and the New Man", *Soviet Studies*, vol. V, no. 2, October 1953, pp. 103-137; Mikhail HELLER, *Cogs in the Soviet Wheel...cit.*, pp. 192 sqq.

⁴ Constantin CUCOȘ, *Istoria pedagogiei. Idei și doctrine pedagogice fundamentale*, Polirom, Iași, 2001, pp. 270, 237-240; Mariana MOMANU, *Educație și ideologie...cit.*, p. 109; Louis RAILLON, "Roger Cousinet", *Perspectives. Revue trimestrielle d'éducation comparée*, vol. 23, nos. 1-2, 1993, pp. 225-236; M. CAUVIN, "L'Éducation dans les pays de langue germanique", in Gaston MIALARET, Jean VIAL (sous la direction de), *Histoire mondiale de l'éducation*, vol. 3, cit., p. 155.

⁵ "History of Education", cit., pp. 38, 42.

in the 19th-20th centuries – of discipline and education within closed communities¹. Yet, ideology has nowhere played such an important part like in Makarenko's project whose writings were consonant with Marx' collectivist anthropology, influenced, in his turn, by the romantic and Hegelian organicism and the Leninist ideas regarding education and organization.

Makarenko is particularly remembered for his role in rethinking the principles of pedagogy in the communist state, and the use of re-education, a method extracted from his theory, in the communist concentration camps. However, his influence on propaganda is no less important. As for both Marx and Lenin the victory of communism depended first and foremost on learning it, propaganda was conceived as part of the huge pedagogical effort by the state. In the 1920s and 1930s, though propaganda had gained its prestige as a consequence of the World War I, it was not backed by any articulate theory of mass communication (but only by simple ideas and presuppositions that I will focus on later). Through Makarenko's project, the Soviet state acquired a communist theory of social influence and its own methods in the state's relations with the society, inspired from the didactic sphere.

Communism and communists believed in and stressed the idea that education can change any individual, regardless of class and age. On the one hand, unlike Marx and Engels, Lenin and his successors were dealing not only with the education of the proletariat, but of the whole society². The great stake and challenge for the Leninists was to reconsider the possibility of including the peasantry – ideologically questionable, but representing the overwhelming majority of the population in the Soviet state and later on in the socialist Central and East European states – among the categories that can be educated. If the landowners and the capitalists could be expropriated and banished, Lenin noticed by 1921 that the "peasants cannot be banished, they cannot be crushed, they must be made an agreement with". And he added: "They can be (and must be) transformed, re-educated, but only through a work of long, slow and prudent organization"³. Neither the party nor its activists were exempted from the chore of re-education. Promotion within the party ranks was conditioned by fulfilling successive rituals of organized initiation under the form of "party education", distributed in a complicated and always changing institutional structure⁴.

On the other hand, the communist state tried to control both the primary socialization, taking place within families, in schools and youth organizations, and the secondary one, focusing on adults⁵. The education of adults appeared as an european practice by late 19th-early 20th century, mainly as a result of industrialization and the

¹ See Jean-Jacques WUNENBURGER, *Utopia sau criza imaginarului*, Rom. transl. Tudor Ionescu, Editura Dacia, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, *passim*; Jean SERVIER, *Istoria utopiei*, Rom. transl. Elena and Octavian Gabor, Editura Meridiane, București, 2000, *passim*.

² Robert C. TUCKER, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia...cit.*, pp. 36-37.

³ *Istoria Partidului Comunist al Uniunii Sovietice*, Editura Politică, București, 1959, p. 357.

⁴ For the genesis political education, see Zev KATZ, "Party-Political Education in Soviet Russia, 1918-1935", *Soviet Studies*, vol. 7, no. 3, January 1956, pp. 237-247; see Peter KENEZ too, *The Birth of the Propaganda State...cit.*, chapter "Political Education", pp. 121-144.

⁵ The distinction between primary and secondary education is made by Peter L. BERGER, Thomas LUCKMANN, *Construcția socială a realității*. *Tratat de sociologia cunoașterii*, Rom. transl. Alex. Butucelea, Editura Univers, București, 1999, *passim*.

increasing need for specialization¹. The communist state extended it at the level of the entire society, particularly in order to achieve political (re)socialization. The "classics" of Marxism-Leninism were furthermore influenced by the phenomenologies regarding the behavior of the masses, which brought forth an infantilizing perspective upon society². In the communist state, as M. Heller observes, the "individual transforms into a child, for whom the state is both parents and friends"³. As an effect on propaganda, the mass communication kept, regardless of the "targeted" age, the infantilizing, intrusive and disciplinary character, specific to the authoritarian didactic act⁴.

As a result of the influence of the pedagogic perspective of the 1930s, the communist propaganda adopted both a communicative, and a social control function. Most recent studies on propaganda focus upon the first dimension, ignore the second and thus fail to understand the specificity of the way in which the communist propagandistic machine worked. The task of the propaganda apparatus was not only to expose as many people as possible to the ideological message of the party, but also to keep the population busy, to isolate the individual from the natural socialization environments, to re-socialize him in the communist organizations, to make him vulnerable (through outraging practices, like denunciation and self-accusation), and, most important, to hold the people under the party's vigilant eyes and to place them in the situation of watching and influencing each other. The rallies, the meetings, the hours of political education represented what the social psychologists call "sequences of consolidation", that is patterns of behavior and thought transmitted to the individuals by both the authorities and the people around, by means of contagious effect of conformism and obedience. Though they did not elaborate on this theme, the communist ideologists had, starting with Makarenko, an intuition that had a serious academic record in the West, especially after Miligram's famous experiments: that is, the influence of the majority and the influence of the social proximity have a significant impact, more durable than the direct influence produced by the asymmetric communication, vertically, upon the individuals' conduct and beliefs⁵. This is one of the main explanations for the extensive and long term use by the communist regimes of the verbal, face to face, direct propaganda, regardless the new means of mass communication, such as radio and television, which offered varied opportunities of a more effective and economical transmission of the message.

Propaganda and Organization

"Organization" was a key-word for the communist regime. However, the way the new state and society were to be organized was not quite clear. Marxist and Leninist

¹ "History of Education", cit., p. 54.

² Serge MOSCOVICI, *Epoca maselor. Tratat istoric asupra psihologiei maselor*, Rom. transl. D. Morărașu and M. Mardare, Institutul European, Iași, 2001, p. 83.

³ Mikhail HELLER, *Cogs in the Soviet Wheel...*cit., p. 59; see the whole chapter regarding the "infantilization" of the communist society.

⁴ For the traits of the authoritarian pedagogic style, see Mihai KRAMAR, *Psihologia stilurilor de gândire și acțiune umană*, Polirom, Iași, 2002, pp. 117-129.

⁵ The size of Western bibliography on these issues is huge, therefore we shall not insist upon it. A good introduction could be found in Ștefan BONCU, *Psihologia influenței sociale*, Polirom, Iași, 2002, *passim*, particularly in the chapters about obedience, conformism and behavioral contagion.

works, so rich in details regarding the ante-revolutionary situation, tell us very few things about institutionalized communism and its future. As we all know, Marx motivated this omission with his anti-utopian position. In his eyes, utopianism was naïve, idealistic, moralistic, mystical, metaphysical, and ahistorical – especially because it proposed artificial projects, ridiculous scenarios through their minuteness, for the ideal society of the future. Marx compared this kind of projects with the “straitjackets” for the political thought. From his historicist perspective, the “music of the future” did not have to be composed beforehand; the future was going to be constructed from the continuous and implacable transformation of the past and present. Consequently, the scientific socialism should not be approached as a social technology; it did not teach the people the ways and means to build socialist institutions. In his turn, Lenin stated that the future is not decided, it is prepared. The Leninist “realism” did not involve skepticism. Lenin believed, as much as Marx did, in an implacable communist future, to which he added that the future should be prepared by clearing the road¹. Yet, in some respects, Marx and Lenin contradicted their credos, offering schematic and contradicting descriptions of the future society². As Giovanni Sartori put it, by assembling disparate ideas Marx offers us as a result a “monumental discontent and vagueness”; working with this ambiguous heterogeneous material, Lenin achieved a “masterpiece of confusion”³.

Given that, as we have seen, the observance of ideology was essential for the Bolsheviks advent to power, their mission after the revolution, when they plunged directly into the future, was twice as difficult. First, because they had to search for coherence where it did not exist. Second, because they had to work with a dogma so vague as far as the future was concerned and had to discretely fill in the blanks of the Marxist-Leninist scenario.

Leninist thinkers usually associate “organization” with “discipline” and military structure. Unlike Marx, who was rather ignorant in military problems (not Engels, who had a special interest in military history), Lenin carefully read Carl von Clausewitz, and the military model appears as a recurrent reference in his political program⁴. The Bolshevik leader insisted on “the most severe discipline, a really stern discipline” without which the “Bolsheviks could not remain in power”⁵. Lenin’s, as well as Stalin’s vocabulary was populated with many military terms: the “proletariat’s vanguard” (Lenin), the “proletariat’s general staff” (Stalin), “detachment”, “struggle”,

¹ Irving Louis HOROWITZ, “Socialist Utopians and Scientific Socialists: Primary Fanaticism and Secondary Contradictions, *Sociological Forum*, vol. 4, no. 1, March 1989, pp. 107-113; David HELD, *Modele ale democrației*, Rom. transl. C. Petre, Editura Univers, București, 2000, p. 153; K.R. POPPER, *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei...*cit., p. 98; Évelyne PISIER (ed.), *Istoria ideilor politice*, Rom. transl. Iolanda Iaworski, Amarcord, Timișoara, 2000, p. 176; Marcel PRÉLOT, Georges LESCUYER, *Histoire des idées politiques*, cit., p. 478; Norman P. BARRY, *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, MacMillan, New York, 1981, p. 108; Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale...*cit., p. 202.

² Rodney BARFIELD, “Lenin’s Utopianism: State and the Revolution”, *Slavic Review*, vol. 30, no. 1, March 1971, pp. 45-56; Wolfgang LEONHARD, *Three Faces of Marxism...*cit., pp. 34-43.

³ Giovanni SARTORI, *Teoria democrației reinterpretată*, Rom. transl. Doru Pop, Polirom, Iași, 1999, pp. 402, 405.

⁴ Jacob W. KIPP, “Lenin and Clausewitz: The Militarisation of Marxism, 1914-1921”, *Military Affairs*, vol. 49, no. 4, October 1985, pp. 184-191.

⁵ V.I. LENIN, “*Stângismul*” – *boala copilăriei comunismului*, 4th ed., Editura pentru Literatură Politică, București, 1953, p. 8.

"offensive", "conquest", "withdrawal", "tactics", "strategy", "orders", "directives", "subordination" and so on.

The Bolshevik party was built on a hierarchic model, centralized, disciplined, provided on purpose by the German Social-Democrat Party¹. To this, features of the Narodnik organizations such as "Zemlya i volya" and "Narodnaya volya", and of Plekhanov's Marxist "Emancipation of Labour Group", including conspiracy, plot strategy, sectarianism, the technique of agitation and, last but not least, terrorism, which Lenin admired, although subsequently he did not fully admit it, were added².

In practice, Lenin was overthrowing Clausewitz' famous phrase, considering politics a continuation of war by other means³. Counting among the important means for struggle, propaganda was thematically and stylistically transformed as to resist confrontation, apply tactics, and continuously identify the enemies and help annihilate them. From the Marxist reading of the Commune of Paris, according to which the communards' great mistake in 1871 was that they did not "crushed" and "shattered" the existing political, social and military structures⁴, Lenin extracted a lesson and made up a central theme of his discourse⁵, loaded with references "liquidation" and "crushing". All of the categories in the Marxist thought became criteria of inclusion/exclusion, of delimitation between allies and enemies⁶. The Leninist preoccupation for organization and discipline was doubled by the concern for planning and streamlining, inherited from the scientific like imaginary of Marxism. The advent of the Soviet state occurred at a time Europe and the United States, as a result of the tremendous successes achieved by industrialization and mechanization, were fascinated with technology. Taylorism and Fordism, besides revolutionizing industrial management, had a huge impact on radical politics. "Optimization", "planning", "standardization", "productivity" became key-words in some technocratic scenarios of social engineering. Fr.W. Taylor's "engineers", reminding us of the vanguard of Saint-Simon's entrepreneurs, were central figures of this mythology⁷.

Lenin was fascinated with Taylor, though formally he tried several times to dissociate from him, as he considered Taylorism a typical manifestation of capitalism. To the party, Taylorism aroused apprehensions, being perceived as exerting a further pressure, in the name of productivity, upon the workers. Furthermore, the separation of physical work from the intellectual effort, which is implicit in Taylorism, was

¹ Michel DREYFUS, *Europa socialiștilor*, Rom. transl. D. Sălceanu, Institutul European, Iași, 2000, pp. 38 sqq.

² Jonathan FRANKEL, "Party Genealogy and the Soviet Historians...cit."; *Istoria Partidului Comunist al Uniunii Sovietice*, cit., pp. 16 seqq.

³ Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale...cit.*, pp. 207, 251; Richard PIPES, *Scurtă istorie a revoluției...cit.*, p. 354.

⁴ Karl MARX, *Războiul civil din Franța*, Editura Politică, București, 1960; see also IDEM, *18 Brumar al lui Ludovic Bonaparte*, Editura pentru Literatură Politică, București, 1954.

⁵ V.I. LENIN, *Statul și revoluția. Învățătura marxistă despre stat și sarcinile proletariatului în revoluție*, Editura Politică, București, 1965, pp. 40-41; Richard PIPES, *Scurtă istorie a revoluției...cit.*, p. 118.

⁶ Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale...cit.*, p. 196.

⁷ Charles S. MAIER, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s", *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1970, pp. 27-61; Sanford M. JACOBY, "Union-Management Cooperation in the United States: Lessons from the 1920s", *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, vol. 37, no. 1, October 1983, pp. 18-33.

contrary to the ideology that was prophesying the disappearance of this separation when communism would be come to power. Despite these curbs, after 1917, Lenin wanted to apply Taylorism at all state levels, arguing that socialism should recuperate everything that is valid in the field of science and technology. The "scientific organization of work" was considered a pillar of scientific socialism in its transition towards communism, and meant to increase the productivity of an economy in crisis by creating a labor culture that would serve the effort for development¹.

Beyond the pragmatic motivation, it was obvious that between the Taylorist exaltation of technical rationality and the communist phantasm of rationalizing the society there were structural resemblances. Marx, somewhat in the pure utopian tradition, regarded work as some kind of a game, a relaxing occupation². Lenin came closer to the technocratic utopias, aiming at geometrizing realities, at the inflexible planning of the activity, at constraining organization, and the strict articulation of conducts³. Taylor's project was an attractive one for the communist state out of three reasons: it provided a lucrative justification for the separation, in fact, of the Party (holder of the organizing reason) from the labor (the rest of the society); it offered a scenario, supported by a "scientific" theory, for the planning and control of social life; it allowed an authoritarian type of relation with the society, as Taylorism was, to a quite significant extent, a disciplining strategy. Though collectivist, Marxism-Leninism was mixing the fascination for the crowd with the fear of it, and was consequently aiming at managing the social body so as to prevent uncontrolled manifestations. Marxist-Leninist humanism was misanthropic, fitting rather the classical political philosophies, suspecting the individual and the collectivity, based on gloomy presuppositions about human nature and the nature of the society, and thus cautious and never hesitating to imagine authoritarian and coercive formulas.

Together with the effort to geometrize and render efficient the society, the purpose of propaganda was to illustrate the exemplarity in order to make visible the scientific dimension of communism. The "exemplary factory" and the "front worker" become the central figures of this type of exhortative message that naturally led in the 1930s to the emergence of Stakhanovism and of the directed social emulation. The activity of propaganda was canalized to the demonstrative gesture, and its rhetoric was contaminated with the technocratic vulgate.

The bureaucratic organizational model also played a significant role in shaping, and is well reflected by the Marxist and Leninist writings. *The State and the Revolution*, in which Marx is largely quoted, describes the communist society of the future as a generalized, harmonious, self-ruled bureaucracy, where each individual has the possibility and duty to administer the state and the economic affairs. In the exact phrasing, the communist "classics" were aspiring to abolishing the professional

¹ Zenovia A. SOCHOR, "Soviet Taylorism Revisited", *Soviet Studies*, vol. 33, no. 2, April 1981, pp. 246-264; Kendall E. BAILES, "Alexei Gastev and the Soviet Controversy over Taylorism, 1918-1924", *Soviet Studies*, vol. 29, no. 3, July 1977, pp. 373-394; IDEM, "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 23, no. 3, July 1981, pp. 421-448; Richard F. VIDMER, "Management Science in the USSR. The Role of 'Americanizers'", *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 3, September 1980, pp. 392-414.

² R.N. BERKI, "On the Nature and Origins of Marx's Concept of Labor", *Political Theory*, vol. 7, no. 1, February 1979, pp. 35-56; Jean SERVIER, *Istoria utopiei*, cit., p. 260.

³ Jean-Jacques WUNENBURGER, *Utopia...cit.*, pp. 150 sqq.

bureaucracy and preparing the whole society to cope with the administrative tasks of the communist society¹. The responsibility of socialism was to prepare the society for this task.

In the early days of the Soviet Union, the Bolsheviks made several hazardous attempts to abolish the state, eliminate the big "burdens" represented by the army and the bureaucracy, and thus rapidly fulfill the Marxist commandments. With the 1920s, the idea of renouncing the state apparatus was totally and forever abandoned. Conversely, the process of radical transformation was attributed to the state, a state that preserved its two main functions, to modernize and centralize. The Soviet state-building involved the setting up of a central, unitary and effective rule, a firm control of the territory, a bureaucratized administration, the standardization of fiscal management, the introduction of constitutionality and of a legal system, the professionalization of the elite, the improvement of the mechanisms of social mobilization, the setting up of some legitimacy formulas, the alphabetization of the population, the utilization of legitimate violence, the modernization of economy (meaning, above all, industrialization and reorganization of rural life) and many others². Naturally, even if the recipe was a traditional one, this does not mean that the result was a traditional state – the communism ingredients severely changed its profile by the politicization and the ideologization of all the measures above, through means of terror orchestrated by an almighty political police, through excessive centralization and the monopolization of the public sphere, of property, of the economy, by the unique party, and so on³. Thus, the institutionalization of communism did not resemble at all the idyllic and bizarre Marxist utopian scenario; the originality of communism, designed as to be total, is rather limited. What the Bolsheviks did was simply to pervert some established forms of governing, organization and modernization.

In order to satisfy the ideological exigency to touch upon every individual and to mobilize the entire society in the wake of the party politics, the propaganda apparatus moved step by step with the bureaucratization, experiencing an impressing efflorescent development, on a complicated and extended organizational structure. Size increased to the detriment of functionality. The propagandistic model, as it was theoretically imagined, aroused great problems at the moment it was turned into practice. The party's (or the leader's, in the personalized dictatorships) claim to control, strictly and daily, each aspect of the mass communication and particularly the "correctness" of the message (in other words, the conformity to the dogma) provoked endless delays and obstructions on the complicated circuit of information. The propagandistic apparatus was an organizational Leviathan, with countless ramifications and hierarchies, thus rendering the circulation of messages hard and unpredictable. Not accidentally, the propaganda system was most often reproached with things that any bureaucracy is reproached with: ossified structures, formalism, lack of efficiency and initiative, secrecy, detachment from reality, exaggeration of the importance of protocol and of

¹ V.I. LENIN, *Statul și revoluția...cit.*, pp. 50 sqq., 94 sqq., etc.

² G. POGGI, *The Development of the Modern State*, Hutchinson, London, 1978, pp. 60-61; Cristopher PIERSON, *The Modern State*, Routledge, London, New York, 1996, pp. 5-34; S.N. EISENSTADT, *Modernization: Protest and Change*, Prentice-Hall, International Inc., London, 1966, pp. 1-19.

³ Juan J. LINZ, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, London, 2000; Paul BROOKER, *Non-Democratic Regimes. Theory, Government and Politics*, MacMillan Press Ltd., London, 2000.

its own jargon, etc.¹. All in all, propaganda, so close to the executive act, could not be more efficient than the regime that had discharged it.

The "classics" of communism were trained during a period when mechanicism and organicism were still disputing the supremacy as models of describing the human society². Marx, Engels, Kautsky and Stalin were closer to organicism, while Plekhanov and Lenin were more attracted by the mechanistic analogy. Lenin was in favor of Plekhanov's perspective, that called the attention upon the "wrong utilization of the biological analogies" and upon the perception of individuals as "simple organs of the social body". This option was also motivated by the fact that one of Lenin's main competitors within the party during the pre-revolutionary period, A. Bogdanov, influenced by Engels' Darwinist organicism, was a fervent adept of the organicist analogies. A mechanistic, Lenin used to compare the party with a factory and was aspiring, for instance, to an organization of the soviet economy according to the coordinates of the German war economy, which he was imagining to have functioned automatically, with no complex decision-making system. Stalin openly came forward in favor of organicism until Bogdanov's falling into disgrace in 1909 and after Lenin's death. The orthodox environment where Stalin had grown, the influence of Darwinism, the philosophical monism, stating the unity between mind and matter, are the most important cultural sources of this option³.

The organic metaphor played a central role in the Stalinist political thought, prefiguring the perspective upon the communist party and society. Insisting more than Lenin did on the "iron discipline" and the "monolithic unity", Stalin described the party as an "organized unitary whole", centralized and classified, "with upper and lower leading organs, with a minority submitted to the majority, with practical decisions mandatory to all the party members". The organic metaphor was also used to justify the subordination to the vanguard (the head) of the rest of the working class (the body). Eventually, organicism was stated in order to underline the party's intolerance of the "existence of factions"⁴.

In a 1905 article, Stalin announced the totalitarian dimension of the Bolshevik party, stating that the rigors of centralism obliges all the party members to act as one, to talk as one, and, eventually, to think the same way. He asserted that the individual, the "separated ego", is a revolte reality and that in the communist future the individuals would be absorbed by the community, behaving like cells in a living organism. Stalin affirmed the individual's subordination to the collective, of the collective to the vanguard, and of the vanguard to the doctrine. Between all of these parties there had to be a "tight unity"⁵.

¹ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., p. 51.

² Karl W. DEUTSCH, "Mechanism, Organism, and Society: Some Models in Natural and Social Science", *Philosophy of Science*, vol. 18, no. 3, July 1951, pp. 230-252; D.C. PHILLIPS, "Organicism in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 31, no. 3, July-September 1970, pp. 413-432.

³ Eric van REE, "Stalin's Organic Theory of the Party", *Russian Review*, vol. 52, no. 1, January 1993, pp. 43-57.

⁴ I.V. STALIN, *Problemele leninismului*, 2nd ed., Editura Partidului Muncitoresc Român, București, 1948, pp. 110-128.

⁵ See the chapter "Unity" in the excellent work by Erik van REE, *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin, A Study in Twentieth Century Revolutionary Patriotism*, Routledge Curzon, London, New York, 2006, pp. 126-135.

The Stalinist organicism was the justification for the inclusion, in order to ensure the surveillance, of the whole society in the party and mass organizations, for the total subordination of the party to the leader and of the whole society to the party, for the cult of personality, for terror, for the successive campaign of purging the party, the organizations and institutions, for the repression of any debate or discontent, whether publicly or privately expressed, etc.¹.

The presumptions in the Stalinist organicism – which assumed the uniformity of the society members and the unanimity of their will – were in fact commandments transmitted to propaganda. This was supposed to make the people, without exception, express themselves in the same way and in the same direction. The individuals' standardization and collectivization were, at the same time, a method and a purpose of propaganda.

Presumptions upon Human Nature and Society

Immediately after the foundation of the Soviet state, the regime started to search for a unified Marxist-Leninist theory that would substantiate its action. As the "new man" was born, the propaganda had to state which was his specific way of thinking, behaving and situating oneself in relation to the new power. The answers were formulated through the combination of the communist doctrine with cut-outs from the scientific theories that were considered to be related. Marx and Lenin shared an old dream from the western culture, that of bringing together knowledge and art in the service of a radical philosophy and of a revolutionary political program. However, in this case, one can speak of a false "ecumenism" of knowledge, as Marx and Lenin did not envisage the integration from equal positions of all truths that proved their scientific support and of the culturally well-articulated values, but the subordination of all theories that could be recovered in the wake of the dialectic materialism. Anyway, in the Soviet Union of the 1920s, there was a greater openness to debates, theoretical imports and experiments. Conversely, the following decades registered a stiffening in dogmatism, a drastic isolation of the communist world from the West, the idiosyncratic selection of the official truths, the communization without exception of science and culture, as well as their partial nationalization.

A first range of answers on the human nature was looked for in physiology. In the 19th century, physiology was one of the main scientific weapons that radical materialists resorted to against the traditional values of religion and idealism. The radicals of 19th century Russia were the advocates of physiology before converting to the socio-economical materialism². Once communists came to power, physiology was progressively recovered and finally occupied a hegemonic position within Soviet science. The central figure of this domination was Ivan Pavlov, whose mechanist theory regarding the "conditional reflex", extracted from experiments of digestive physiology, was extrapolated and turned into a universal explicative model to other disciplines: psychology, biology, theory of language and communication, etc.

¹ Illustrative is Richard OVERY's impressive work, *The Dictators. Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia*, W.W. Norton&Company, New York, London, 2004; see especially the chapters about the State-Party and terror.

² David JORAVSKY, "The Mechanical Spirit: The Stalinist Marriage of Pavlov to Marx", *Theory and Society*, vol. 4, no. 4, Winter 1977, pp. 457-477.

Pavlovian physiology, stating that man's psychology is strictly determined by the environment, was relatively easy to conciliate with the Marxist theory of knowledge. A further advantage resided in the fact that the Leninist ideas about "reflection" in *Materialism and empiriocriticism*¹ (where sensations were seen as "reflections", "images", "copies" of the outer world) were obviously influenced by the theory of the conditional reflex. The Pavlovian physiology helped the Soviets to denounce the introspective, "subjectivist" psychology (the psychologism that Marx hated) and to allege that they would have found a materialist psychology.

The formula of materialist psychology was obtained by combining the Marxist-Leninist postulates with reflexology and American behaviorism. Behaviorism included reflexology among its essential intellectual sources, and shared with it a mechanistic perspective upon the human being. "The man is a machine" said John B. Watson, the founder of behaviorism, who resuscitated the mechanistic reading of the living, specific to the 18th-19th centuries, whose successful carrier was downplayed by embryology and Darwinism². One good explanation for the success of behaviorism in the 1920s is the fact that Watson was promising a methodology of quantification, verification and replication of scientific research, a goal of most human sciences at that time, who attempted to resemble as much as possible natural sciences and to fulfill the positivist requirements of knowledge. Accusing the introspective psychology of having hidden the psyche into an unfathomable area, the behaviorists stated that the only measurable criteria to judge human psychology is behavior, which behaviorists said, did not have a mental cause, but was a reaction, a reflex to the stimuli coming from the outer environment³.

Nothing proved more seducing for the Soviets than a western theory confirming their own conceptions about human nature, and endowed the environment with such an important role in the individual's development. Behaviorism enjoyed a great success in the 1920 Soviet Union, with the Soviet psychologists being acquainted with the debates in the West upon this subject. The article about behaviorism in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* from 1927 was signed by Watson himself⁴.

Behaviorism presented two great advantages and one big disadvantage to the Soviet regime. A first advantage was that the way individuals functioned was translated according to the stimulus-answer simplistic scheme. In other words, behavior depended on the nature of the outer stimuli. An individual totally exposed to outer stimuli, obedient to them, was very much appreciated by the Soviet ideologists, who imagined that the mere control of the signals through propaganda was enough to engender the change of human nature. A second advantage was the fact that behaviorism allowed the regime to interpret the people's conduct as a symptom of their conscience. Acquiescence in the party policy – whichever its source might have been, the pro-communist fervor or, on the contrary, the obedience provoked by terror, the conformism transmitted by the others' cowardice, the credulity induced by

¹ See, in detail, V.I. LENIN, *Materialism și empiriocriticism*, Editura Partidului Comunist Român, București, 1948.

² Karl W. DEUTSCH, "Mechanism, Organism, and Society...cit."; Dominique LECOURT, "Vitalism și mecanicism", in IDEM (ed.), *Dicționar de istoria și filosofia științelor*, Rom. transl. Laurențiu Zoicaș et alii, Polirom, Iași, 2005, pp. 1387-1391.

³ Lucille C. BIRNBAUM, "Behaviorism in the 1920s", *American Quarterly*, vol. 7, no. 1, Spring 1955, pp. 15-30.

⁴ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., p. 104.

manipulation – was interpreted by propaganda, using one single reading template, as a sign of the enthusiastic adhesion to the communist regime.

During the Stalinist period, this procedure was widely spread by the propaganda. The forced mobilization in the wake of the great Stalinist campaigns, such as industrialization, the conformation to collectivization, maintained especially by terror, the popular demonstrations carefully directed, the cult of personality, and the rallies with their humiliating rituals were all interpreted as signs of effusion provoked by the party politics. Paradoxically, this is the very moment when the advantage represented by the behaviorist reading of the human nature was transformed, at the official level, into a disadvantage. The ideologists discovered that this perspective describes an inert being, deprived of responsibilities, dependent on the party's exhortations¹. Under Stalin, in the dispute inherited from the "classics" between determinism and voluntarism, the focus was placed upon the latter. And voluntarism, which was based on a mechanism of overbidding, could not tolerate a partial, formal, simply behavioral transformation of the Soviet man. Consequently, psychology was reoriented, in the decades to come, towards the "conscious action", describing an individual endowed with initiative and responsibility, and the propaganda received the mission to stage such a "new man"². From the Pavlovian explicative model the theory of knowledge was preserved (as the regime found it convenient, after all, to get a being completely permeable to the outer stimuli, and therefore to the propagandistic messages), but the theory of action was revised (stating that the man acts out of one's own initiative after he becomes "conscious", that is, after he receives the correct signals and is politically resocialized).

At the level of propaganda, the behaviorist type of reading remained a constant to the end of communist history, being the easiest instrument to show that power enjoys the unanimous and unconditional popular support. This was the sign of a pragmatic adaptation of propaganda, as it turned out – with time passing by, and the party's charisma changing into routine due to the ritualization of fervor and the bureaucratization of political life – that man and society were changing incomparably harder than expected, and not necessarily in the sought direction. The obedient behavior was a palpable proof worth pointing out of the adhesion to the State-Party, less than a fervent transformation of the consciousness and more than nothing. As Alain Besançon was noticing, if the regime could not convince the people to embrace socialism, at least it could make them see it³.

Psychology fell into disgrace starting with the 1930s, so that other sciences had to stand to a greater extent the shock of the voluntarist turn under Stalin. The most famous and dramatic case is that of biology, called up, in its turn, to "scientifically" sustain the new perspective on man. Establishing an intellectual genealogy for the "soviet biology" proved to be difficult at first. Lenin was an ignorant in the field and had no clear idea about which direction to follow. An ambivalent attitude towards Darwin had been inherited from Marx. On the one hand, Marx was acknowledging the author of the theory of "natural selection" as a source of inspiration for his own

¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 105 sqq.

² Robert C. TUCKER, *The Soviet Political Mind. Studies in Stalinist and Post-Stalin Change*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, London, 1963, see the chapter "Stalin and the Uses of Psychology", pp. 91-121; Leopold HAIMSON, "Soviet Psychology and the Soviet Conception of Man", *World Politics*, vol. 5, no. 3, April 1953, pp. 414-421.

³ Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale...cit.*, p. 266.

theory of class struggle. Engels asserted in the preface to the English edition of 1888 of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* that Marx achieved in the science of history what Darwin had achieved in the natural sciences¹, and this sentence was ritually invoked each time when the "scientific" character of Marxism was doubted. On the other hand, Marx was irritated by Darwin's utilization of Th.R. Malthus' ideas, to which he felt an unrestrained aversion. Consequently, he insisted several times on the idea that the class struggle should not be equaled with the struggle for survival, as the followers of social Darwinism were doing. Unlike Engels, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Darwin, Marx felt closer to Pierre Trémaux's theory, today forgotten, which offered a geographical explanation to the origin of species and the differences between the individuals².

Soviet biologists carried out a selective retrieval of Darwinism, and used Lamarckism as an alternative. J.-B. Lamarck was recalled by the soviet discourse as the author of "hereditary transmission of the acquired characters". This perspective was dominant at Lamarck's time, as it had been previously supported by authors like Diderot, Buffon or Maupertius, Lamarck's input on it being that of integrating in a general theory of the living. Darwin – whom the Soviets used to oppose Lamarck – took over and developed, in his theory of the pangenesis, the idea of the "heredity of the acquired characters". Darwin insisted that in his work the same attention is paid, as in Lamarck's writings, to the influence of the outer factors upon the organism³. In fact, the Soviets imported the misunderstandings between the neo-Lamarckists and the neo-Darwinists occurring in the West at the crossroads between centuries.

Another disagreement that influenced the evolution of Soviet biology was that between Lamarckists and most Darwinists, on the one hand, and the representatives of the then-rising genetic school, on the other. Genetics is based on a dissociation from Darwin and especially from Lamarck, but in the 1930s-1940s, at the European level, a reconciliation between evolutionism and genetics occurred. At that very moment, the Soviets proclaimed the irreconcilable divorce between the two, repudiating genetics. An extremely influent Russian botanist, K.A. Timiryazev, had called the attention since the 19th century on the "danger" represented by Gregor Mendel's laws against Darwinism. The same Timiryazev mentioned Lamarck's contribution to emphasizing the influence of the environment upon the mutability of the hereditary characters of the organism. He exerted an overwhelming influence on Ivan V. Michurin and Trofim Lysenko, who dominated Soviet biology under Stalin⁴.

The Soviet option for Lamarck is thus quite understandable. On one hand, they noticed Marx' idiosyncrasy to some of Darwin's ideas. On the other hand, following the neo-Lamarckist interpretation, they identified a predecessor that confirmed, from the position of the sciences of nature, the Marxist theory of the influence of the

¹ Karl MARX, Friedrich ENGELS, *Manifestul Partidului Comunist*, cit., p. 88.

² Gerald RUNKLE, "Marxism and Charles Darwin", *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 23, no. 1, February 1961, pp. 108-126; Terence BALL, "Marx and Darwin: A Reconsideration", *Political Theory*, vol. 7, no. 4, November 1979, pp. 469-483.

³ René TATON (ed.), *La science contemporaine*, vol. I (*Le XIX^e siècle*), PUF, Paris, 1995, pp. 542-549; Gh. MOHAN, P. NEACȘU, *Teorii, legi, ipoteze și concepții în biologie*, Editura Scaiul, București, 1992, pp. 104-122; see entries "Darwinism", "Lamarck", "Lamarckism", "Lisenkism", "Viu", in Dominique LECOURT (ed.), *Dictionar...cit.*

⁴ Maxim W. MIKULAK, "Darwinism, Soviet Genetics, and Marxism-Leninism", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 31, no. 3, July-September 1970, pp. 359-379.

environment upon the individual, at the same time excluding the genetic perspective. In the 1920s, genetics made its way in the Soviet Union, although the accent felt here, to a greater extent than in the West, on the natural and artificial selection, and less on the genetics of mutations. Anyway, after the brutal transformation of "Lysenkoism" and "Michurinism" into official dogmas under Stalin, genetics was excluded, for several decades, from the licit sciences in the USSR. The Nazi utilization of some ideas taken from the genetics made even more difficult the recovery of the scientific progresses in the field.

Lysenko's ascension can be explained through his promise to develop a utilitarian biology, in the service of Stalinist voluntarism. Lysenko turned Michurin's experiments in horticulture into a practical evidence for the validity of the new Soviet biology, which was based on few postulates: the environment influences the organisms, these must adapt themselves in order to survive, and the changes are transmitted by heredity; the evolution can be influenced and speeded by an artificial control of the environment conditions; the transformation takes place in accordance with the objective laws of the conditioning and there is no place for subjectivism, hazard and arbitrariness. Unlike Darwinism and genetics, the Soviet Transformism promised a rapid and controlled evolution of organisms. As is known, Lysenko's campaign (the "greatest charlatan of the 20th century", as M. Heller was describing him¹) eventually failed right where it claimed to be strong, in practice, with disastrous results on the post-war Soviet agriculture. But the practical failure corresponded to Lysenko's ideological triumph, whose hegemony in the Soviet biology was proclaimed in 1948 with Stalin's support². Soon, the *ad-litteram* application of Lysenko's methods in agriculture was abandoned, but the voluntarist discourse to which it contributed – aiming at a radical and quick transformation of nature and, *ipso facto*, of man – remained valid. The propaganda acquired, by this kind of engineering, an ally (changing environment) for the transformation of man/woman, an ally who Lenin did not have until the "revolution" started.

The physiology of the conditional reflex, behaviorism and Lysenkoism contributed, all of them, to the overvaluation of the propaganda's power. The assumed existence of an individual completely exposed to the outer signals stimulated the trust in the transformist capacities of a propagandistic apparatus that transmits the correct messages.

At the time the Soviet state was created, propaganda was already regarded world wide as almighty. That was the outcome of its spectacular impact and efficiency during the Great War³. Moreover, the presumptions on human nature and the society shared by the first generation of theoreticians of mass communication strengthened the myth of the almighty propaganda. Their corollary was the so-called "magic bullet theory", also known as the "hypodermic needle theory" or the "transmission belt theory". This theory stated that a message transmitted by means of mass communication have a direct and immediate impact on each and every individual, and the members of a group at large – members identical by nature and atomized by the industrial society – who perceive it uniformly and react identically. In this respect, the public was regarded

¹ Mikhail HELLER, *Cogs in the Soviet Wheel...cit.*, p. 183.

² *Ibidem*; Robert C. TUCKER, *The Soviet Political Mind...cit.*, pp. 91-98.

³ Ralph Haswell LUTZ, "Studies of World War Propaganda, 1914-1933", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 5, no. 4, December 1933, pp. 496-516.

as a mass, an amorphous target, which blindly and predictably obeys the stimulus-answer scheme¹. This paradigm was shaped by the focus of the attention upon the transmitter and the content of the message, ignoring, the form of the message, the transmission means, the situation of communication, the receiver's profile, and the feed-back.

The presumptions of reflexology and behaviorism were part of the cultural genealogy of the "magic bullet theory"². Another important source were the theories formulated in the second half of the 19th century regarding "mass society", which deciphered the birth, paralleled by modernization and industrialization, of a new social reality ("mechanical solidarity" at E. Durkheim, "Gesellschaft" at F. Tönnies), in which the individual, with the dilution of traditional, "organic" solidarities, was isolated and exposed to the state and its institutions, and in the absence of protection from the society intermediary strata³.

With empiric research in social psychology and sociological studies on the selective influence of mass communication and the importance of social mediation, the "magic bullet theory" was gradually abandoned in the West. Yet, in the Soviet Union, where, starting with the 1930s, psychology, social psychology and sociology were blacklisted, genuine research absent, and academic contacts with the West prohibited, the situation was different. In the 1920s, several researches on public opinion were conducted, with embarrassing results for the Soviet officials. Understandable, as the outcome was that a great part of the population did not understand what was the specificity of the new regime, and could not even define the word "proletarian". Moreover, people were exasperated by the "incredible length" of the discourses of the agents of communization and by their abusive behavior⁴. The discrepancy between the projected image of the society's reaction and the reaction measured by the scientists was perceived as a threat to the regime's credibility. Instead of correcting the deficiencies, they forbade further research.

The presumptions that underlay the "magic bullet theory" made the communist leaders believe that an extended and robust propagandistic apparatus could ensure unanimity. Hence the belief that a message, once transmitted, was uniformly received if it had a correct content, needing no sophisticated working upon the form of the message. This procedural ignorance, which broadly continued until the end of communism, affected the communication capacities of the Soviet propaganda.

The only hints by the "classics" for rendering propaganda effective could be found in their considerations about language. Marx was aware of the importance of language in spreading ideology. He took from Hegel the idea that people needs its own language to develop consciousness and to make for liberation. In contrast to the romantic perspective, which saw in language the expression of a people's spirit and subjectivity, Marx regarded it as the product of material development. Consequently,

¹ Melvin L. DEFLEUR, Sandra BALL-ROKEACH, *Teorii ale comunicării în masă*, Rom. transl. D. and C. Harabagiu, Polirom, Iași, 1999, pp. 151-172; Werner J. SEVERIN, James W. TANKARD, Jr., *Perspective asupra teoriilor comunicării în masă. Originile, metodele și utilizarea lor în mass media*, Rom. transl. Mădălina and Maria Paxaman, Polirom, Iași, 2004, pp. 277-278.

² Armand MATTELART, Michèle MATTELART, *Istoria teoriilor comunicării*, Rom. transl. Ioan Pânzaru, Polirom, Iași, 2001, p. 26.

³ See, at length, William KORNHAUSER, *The Politics of Mass Society*, The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, 1959.

⁴ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., pp. 93 sqq.

the appropriate language was the one anchored in the reality, which reflected the material conditions of existence. The "language of ideology" resulted from the "language of real life"¹.

Lenin kept the concern for the anchoring of language into the deep reality. In his articles about the importance of the press, he criticized the fact that

"the Soviet press left too much space and paid too much attention to political trifles, to personal issues of the political leadership, through which the capitalists from all countries were trying to turn off the attention of the popular masses from the genuinely serious, deep and fundamental problems of their lives".

Therefore, the new Soviet press was supposed to be an instrument of "economic re-education of the masses" and to "place in the forefront the work problems, directly regarded in point of their practical aspect". For the rest, Lenin was focusing on the ideological fidelity of the content of the journalistic message². The only procedural indications found in his writings are those asking for "simplicity" and "brevity" in the press style³. Before 1917, Lenin shared contradictory opinions respecting the freedom of press, but he certainly introduced censorship immediately after the "revolution" and established the communist monopoly on the mass-media. The rule stayed valid, in spite of some little variation of intensity, until the end of communism⁴.

After Lenin's death, Stalin noticed that the main theoretical debates on succession from the 1920s were articulated on the struggle for power, and thus decided to simplify and fix the ideology in order to fight "fractionalism". As historian D. Volkogonov fortunately put it, "On the very day of Lenin's funerals the 'embalming' of these ideas also started ..."⁵.

Parenthetically, Stalin was not the character uninterested in ideas that Trotsky described. Though he was one of the few members of the Bolshevik leadership who were not intellectuals, Stalin devoted himself to the study of ideology, reading Lenin as closely as nobody else, in order to ensure not only his succession to power, but also ideological succession. From many points of view, below Trotsky, Zinovyev, Kamenev and Bukharin, he succeeded to reach the top of the pyramid just because he used as a main weapon "the defence of Leninism" and considered himself the main interpreter of Lenin's ideas⁶.

The "simplification" of Leninism was the main Stalinist intervention in theory, and this will have an overwhelming influence upon mass communication. Stalin extracted from the heterogeneous body of Leninist and Marxist writings some of the important ideas that, after more or less discrete interpolations, he displayed as postulates, maxims, prompts to actions, expressed in simple sentences and accessible vocabulary. Hence, the mission of propaganda, which was supposed to closely follow

¹ Daniel J. COCK, "Marx's Critique of Philosophical Language", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 42, no. 4, June 1982, pp. 530-554.

² V.I. LENIN, "Din schița inițială a articolului 'Sarcinile imediate ale puterii sovietice. Note stenografice'", in V.I. LENIN, I.V. STALIN, *Despre presă. Culegere de articole*, 2nd ed., Editura Partidului Comunist Român, București, 1951, pp. 37-42, *passim*.

³ Peter KENEZ, *The Birth of the Propaganda State...cit.*, see the chapter "The Press", pp. 21-49.

⁴ *Ibidem*; Wolfgang LEONHARD, *Three Faces of Marxism...cit.*, p. 79.

⁵ D. VOLKOGONOV, *Lenin. O nouă biografie*, Rom. transl. Anca Irina Ionescu, Editura Orizonturi-Lider, București, 1994, p. 470.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 472; Robert C. TUCKER, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia...cit.*, p. 70.

the dogma, to use simple formulas, to repeat them incessantly and amplify them by means of a cascade effect¹.

The importance of simplification, repetition and contagion in controlling the crowds has been underlined since the 19th century by Gustave Le Bon, in his famous book *La Psychologie des foules*². Le Bon's work became a real text book for the communist and Nazi propagandists, and its procedural indications, including the law of simplification, the law of repetition and the law of contagion were the bedrock of the first propaganda systems³. The problem of communist propaganda is that it stayed until the end in this incipient stage of understanding the methods of mass communication.

As far as language is concerned, it is known that N.J. Marr's theory, stating the class character of language, dominated the Soviet academic world until Stalin's intervention, in 1950, against Marxism. Stalin stated that the language, its grammatical structure and the bulk of vocabulary are not the product of one epoch or class and, consequently, he opposed the creation of a proletarian language⁴. Yet, everybody knows that the Soviet regime created a specific "wooden language"⁵.

The Regime-Society Relation

The easiest way to reconstruct the way in which the "classics" of communism understood the relation with the society is to start from their opinion on democracy and majority. This opinion betrays, in a quite clarifying manner, the ambivalent attitude towards society, the mixture of demophilia and misanthropy that I have already mentioned.

As for democracy, Marx was, as usual, undecided. Until his conversion to communism, in 1845, he used the term "democracy" in an appreciative way. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the political power was defined already as the "organized power of one class for oppressing another" and therefore, the representative modern state appeared as the incarnation of the bourgeois political domination and as an instrument of keeping the proletariat in poverty⁶. Yet, Marx did not exclude the participation of the working class' in the electoral process of Bourgeois democracies until these would be overturned by the communist revolution. Unlike the anarchist, Marx tended rather towards a form of extra-parliamentarism, acknowledging the

¹ Terence BALL, Richard DAGGER, *Ideologii politice...* cit., pp. 160-161; Wolfgang LEONHARD, *Three Faces of Marxism...* cit., pp. 99-100; for the adaptation of Karl Deutsch's "cascade model" to the totalitarian systems, see Giovanni SARTORI, *Teoria democrației...* cit., pp. 109-111.

² Gustave LE BON, *Psihologia mulțimilor*, Rom. transl. Oana Vlad, Marina Ghitoc, Editura Anima, București, 1990, pp. 69-71.

³ Jean MARIE-DOMENACH, *La propagande politique*, PUF, Paris, 1950, pp. 49-76.

⁴ I.V. STALIN, *Marxismul și problemele lingvisticii*, Editura Partidului Comunist Român, București, 1950; M. MILLER, "Marr, Stalin and the Theory of Language", *Soviet Studies*, vol. 2, no. 4, April 1951, pp. 364-371; Lawrence L. THOMAS, "Some Notes on the Marr School", *American Slavic and East European Review*, vol. 16, no. 3, October 1957, pp. 323-348; Georges MOUNIN, *Istoria lingvisticii...* cit.

⁵ Françoise THOM, *Limba de lemn*, Rom. transl. Mona Antohi, Humanitas, București, 1993.

⁶ Karl MARX, Friedrich ENGELS, *Manifestul Partidului Comunist*, cit., p. 32.

source of the real democracy in the autonomous proletarian organizations¹. Marx was fascinated, just like Lenin and Stalin later, by the Commune of Paris and imagined the communist state starting from the standards imposed by it. Briefly, we can say that Marx did not grant democracy a distinct political meaning: he regarded communism as a higher form of democracy, a direct one, unmediated by the parliamentary "representation"; as an organization of the community which is not preoccupied by the problem of power, betrayed by the etymology of democracy; as a harmonious, self-organized demos. As we can see, although he was denouncing utopia, Marx was envisaging communism, the democracy of the future, in accordance with the coordinates of the most rudimentary and idyllic utopian scenarios².

Lenin was rather ambiguous. Generally, he was inclined, when following Marx, to discredit democracy, associating it with the bourgeois state, and announcing its death, and when he found virtues, he was only extracting them from the literal meaning of the word, that is the power of the people. As for the Western forms of democracy he had but contemptuous words. He once said that "in the Parliament, they only chatter, with the main purpose of cheating the 'mob'", while the real power was in the hands of the bureaucracy, of the police and of army, controlled, on their turn, by the capitalist interests³. Paradoxically, Lenin attributed to the Western democracies the features of dictatorship (because they imposed restrictions on liberties and availed themselves of the use of violence), while granting the proletariat's dictatorship the attributes of what the westerners were calling democracy (freedom and decision-making power for a vast majority)⁴.

Lenin borrowed from Marx the idea of the proletarians' "tactical" participation in the "bourgeois Parliaments", as well as that of the organization, as an alternative to the legislative, of some (soviet) councils of workers and soldiers (these started to appear in Russia after 1905)⁵. From Marx, again, he took, as one can easily see in *The State and the Revolution*, the image of the harmonious demos installed in the maturity phase of communism. Finally, Lenin admitted that "without representative institutions, we cannot conceive democracy, not even the proletarian one", but the new representative institutions were going, under Marx' influence again, to combine legislative and executive power⁶.

¹ Philip RESNICK, "The Political Theory of Extra-Parliamentarism", *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 6, no. 1, March 1973, pp. 65-88, especially pp. 72-75.

² Giovanni SARTORI, *Teoria democrației...cit.*, pp. 393-424; David HELD, *Modele ale democrației*, cit., pp. 136-169. The quotation from Marx and Engels concerning the society of the future that the propagandists used the most often can be found at the end of section II of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (see, Romanian edition p. 32): "Instead of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".

³ V.I. LENIN, *Statul și revoluția...cit.*, pp. 49 sqq.

⁴ Patrick DUNLEAVY, Brendan O'LEARY, *Teoriile statului. Politica democrației liberale*, Rom. transl. Vivia-Dolores Săndulescu, Epigraf, Chișinău, 2002, p. 196; Giovanni SARTORI, *Teoria democrației...cit.*

⁵ David PRIESTLAN, "Soviet Democracy, 1917-91", *European History Quarterly*, vol. 32, no. 1, 2002, pp. 111-130; H. Gordon SKILLING, "'People's Democracy' in Soviet Theory", part II, *Soviet Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2, October 1951, pp. 131-149; Salvo MASTELLONE, *Istoria democrației în Europa. Din secolul al XVIII-lea până în secolul XX*, Rom. transl. Bogdan M. Popescu and Gheorghe-Lencan Stoica, Antet, București, 2004, pp. 186 sqq.

⁶ V.I. LENIN, *Statul și revoluția...cit.*, p. 50.

In the case of Russia, Lenin said that it would be a "naivety" for the Bolsheviks to wait for "a 'formal' majority" by universal suffrage in order to take over the power¹. For this very reason, he operated the already mentioned change in Marx' theory of the revolution, talking about vanguard, about the minority force that was going to take over the power in the name of the working class. This formula worked in 1917, the revolution of October/November being actually a *coup d'état*. The weak electoral results of the Bolshevik party in the first general elections after the seizure of power – the ballot for the Constitutive Assembly in November 1917, in which the Bolsheviks got one quarter of the total votes – enforced the conviction that the universal vote was not the proper solution for the Bolsheviks. Therefore, the Assembly was dissolved without hesitation². As David Wedgood Benn noticed, Lenin's motto seemed to be "act first, convince after!"³. In the Leninist scenario, the Bolsheviks were going to enlarge progressively the popular support, to gain the "majority's sympathy" by temporarily using the levers of the hardly conquered state. And so it happened, as the institutions, factories, organizations, schools, army, press, art, and so on, transformed themselves into multipliers of the new regime's message.

However, things went harder than anticipated. The civil war and numerous popular revolts indicated that the "revolution" has not brought forth the general enthusiasm and consensus. "We did not succeed in convincing the wide masses", Lenin admitted in 1921⁴. Therefore, the state was preserved, in spite of the Marxist prophecy, and the authoritarian attitude towards society became a constant. The pre-revolutionary Leninist vision upon the issue of representativeness remained valid after the "revolution" as well. As gaining the majority was a problem, the Bolshevik regime kept on stating, explicitly or implicitly, that the opinion of the majority did not count when not matching the communist truth. As noticed, the Party did not represent the proletariat and the rest of the population through some conventional democratic delegation, but by means of some mystical delegation, coming from the ideology on the proletariat⁵. Lenin made it clearly that he would not obey the peasant majority and he would not acknowledge the "proletarian democracy" if these were contrary to the ideology⁶. The truth of the ideology was superior to the truth of the majority.

This fact shows once more that Marxism-Leninism was more related than it admitted with utopianism. As Jean-Jacques Wunenburger noticed:

"The experiences of the state democracy appropriate the inheritance of the utopias and even try to answer for their flagrant and painful imperfections not by the utopian excess impending to their project, but, on the contrary, by the distance that separates them from a final society whose totalitarian character is reversed into virtue"⁷.

¹ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., p. 60.

² Richard PIPES, *Scurtă istorie a revoluției...cit.*, pp. 153 sqq.

³ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., p. 60.

⁴ *Apud* Robert CONQUEST, *Marea teroare. O reevaluare*, Rom. transl. Marilena Dumitrescu, Humanitas, București, 1998, p. 13.

⁵ Alain BESANÇON, *Originile intelectuale...cit.*, p. 217.

⁶ Robert CONQUEST, *Marea teroare...cit.*, pp. 16-17.

⁷ Jean-Jacques WUNENBURGER, *Utopia...cit.*, p. 259; see also Bronislaw BACZKO, *Les imaginaires sociaux. Mémoires et espoirs collectifs*, Payot, Paris, 1984, chapter "Utopies et totalitarismes".

Preserving from the early German philosophers the idea that the real world cannot be directly seized through the data furnished by the senses or through the empirical observations¹, Marxism-Leninism was articulated, in spite of its materialism, on a radical form of apriorism, always valuing the utopian project in its confrontation with reality. The party's and the leaders' charisma lied in the capacity to apprehend that hidden order, undistinguishable for the uninitiated, from behind the inconvenient present and the unconvincing future. The freshness of communism lied in its transcendence², which insured its immunity in front of any empirical challenge. Theoretically conceived at a time the ideology of progress was fashionable, the communist state was a "teleological state"³, a millenarian power, and the apodictic justice of the project required fidelity to the ideological orthodoxy, justified the extreme voluntarism of the regime, and excused the excesses. The functions of the communist propaganda derived from the necessity of the orthodoxy, of protecting the image of the project (a fact that allowed the lie, the censorship, the repression of different opinions, and the contempt of the contingency). This conception was the main support and, at the same time, the alibi for the birth and preservation of dictatorship, for the use of repression, of censorship, and for the other major interventions in the society's way of life.

The Soviet state presented itself as a preamble to the superior form of democracy represented by communism (in the making). To reach its envisioned goal, the state had to first and foremost change the general attitude of the population towards the party, its ideology and policy. This generated an unprecedented offensive against society, which lasted for more than a decade. I will divide this period into two phases: the radicalism of war communism (1918-1921), and the gradualism of the New Economic Policy, shortly NEP (1921-1929).

The first period was marked by a Jacobin, theoretical revolutionarism, and a genuine war against society. This was the phase when an *ad litteram* implementation of the Marxist-Leninist theory was aimed at, which, by including in the category of the ideological enemies the "bourgeoisie" and the "peasants", targeted more than 90% of the population of the Soviet state. Also, according to the same vision, the transition period to communism was to be very short, and therefore radical and lasting measures had to be taken. The features of totalitarianism were already emerging, with the Bolshevik regime trying to control the whole society, to widespread terror, to centralize decisions and economy, to regiment the entire population in organizations, in order to make them carry out forced labor, to expropriate the enemies in order to eliminate their autonomy, etc.⁴. The campaign did not reach its ideological goal, as it did not manage to destroy by means of revolutionary fervor the old order and to create a new, harmonious and prosperous one instead. Yet, it was successful, so to say, in improving the methods. Later on, Stalinism will innovate very few things in radicalism, with war communism offering it a source of inspiration for many of the measures it would take.

¹ Patrick DUNLEAVY, Brendan O'LEARY, *Teoriile statului...cit.*, p. 200.

² Alain BESANÇON, *Nenorocirea secolului. Despre comunism, nazism și unicitatea "Șoah"-ului*, Rom. transl. Mona Antohi, Humanitas, București, 1999, p. 59.

³ Ghiță IONESCU, *Investigarea comparativă a politicii comuniste*, Rom. transl. R. Paraschivescu, Humanitas, București, 1992, p. 101.

⁴ Details about war communism and red terror, led by Lenin himself, can be found at Richard PIPES, *Scurtă istorie a revoluției...cit.*, pp. 182-215, *passim*.

NEP was, on the other hand, meant to become a Thermidor, a phase of the mitigated revolutionarism, a tactical demotion before the final assault. However, as Richard Pipes states, it was a false Thermidor. The neo-Jacobins continued to hold power, and initiated reforms only in the field of economy, while the offensive against the society continued¹. The NEP measures did not replace the methods used during war communism, but doubled and improved them.

Robert C. Tucker speaks of a "NEP culture"², consisting in a set of moderate measures that, though never extensively applied, were somewhat preserved by the memory of the communist elite, setting a precedent, a tradition that Khrushchev, Gorbachev and other moderate leaders from the communist bloc tried to revive. When it comes to the relation between the regime and the society, the NEP culture favored persuasion and educational methods at the expense of brutal repression; it included a gradualist approach to the issue of change and made room for a certain normalization of the social life, especially by proclaiming the need of cooperation between workers and peasants.

The three factions struggling for power after Lenin's death were placed somewhere between the two position, the radical one, of war communism, and the gradualist one, of the NEP. Trotsky's, Zinovyev's, and Kamenev's Left represented the radical pole, Bukharin's, Rykov's, and Tomsy's Right the moderate one, with the so-called Stalinist centre coming closer to the Left, replace it after its defeat and borrowing its radical ethos in the future confrontation with the Right³. Thus at the end of the 1920s the Soviet power was impregnated with the radical ethos.

Since the very beginning of his regime, Stalin focused on the voluntarist side of Marxism-Leninism. Estimating that the NEP gradualism gave no results, Stalin required a return to the rapid pace and style of change experienced during war communism⁴. Industrialization, collectivization, urbanization and the other great campaigns started by Stalin, part of what Robert C. Tucker calls "state-initiated, state-directed and state-enforced revolution from above"⁵, met in an effort of social and political mobilization never achieved before. As known from Karl Deutsch's classical definition, the social mobilization supposes the breakdown of old social and political loyalties, a change in the organization manner and in the lifestyle of a community, which render people available to new types of behavior and thought, of organization and sociability, etc.⁶. In the case of the Soviet Union, and with 1945 of the other member states of the communist bloc, the expropriations, the continuous reorganization, the extraordinary social mobility, the new opportunities generated by the eradication of illiteracy, by industrialization, urbanization, bureaucratization, etc., turned big parts of the population vulnerable and dependent on the State-Party and on the new way of organization it patronized.

Mobilization implies an increasing participation in matters regarding the interest of the state/society. The specificity of the totalitarian systems is related to the fact that they try to maintain a regime of continuous, maximal mobilization, theoretically

¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 313-343.

² Robert C. TUCKER, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia...cit.*, p. 85.

³ *Ibidem*, pp. 60 sqq., pp. 86 sqq., *passim*; Robert CONQUEST, *Marea teroare...cit.*, pp. 18-36.

⁴ Robert HIMMER, "The Transition from War Communism to the New Economic Policy: An Analysis of Stalin's Views", *Russian Review*, vol. 53, no. 4, October 1994, pp. 515-529.

⁵ Robert C. TUCKER, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia...cit.*, p. 75.

⁶ Karl DEUTSCH, "Social Mobilization and Political Development", *American Political Science Review*, vol.55, no. 3, 1961, pp. 493-514.

aiming at the whole population. The mechanism worked better at the time when the regime was founded and during periods of crisis. The Stalinist period had three such moments: the 1930s, when Stalin started to implement his voluntarist plans of transforming nature, society and man; the war period, and the time of reconstruction. In these moments, the regime could rely, to a certain extent, on the ideological and patriotic fervor; but for most of the time mobilization was achieved through terror, co-interest and especially organization. The totalitarian mobilization was projected to be voluntary, spontaneous, enthusiastic, and general, but in fact it was only orchestrated, mechanical, routinized, ritualized and incomplete.

From the Stalinist perspective, propaganda was one of the transmission belts of the party in its relation to society, an instrument to implement "measures" (that is policies) dictated by the leadership and mobilize the whole population for this purpose. In other words, it played an executive function, like the rest of the party, which regarded each "field of activity" and concerned each citizen.

Investing propaganda with an executive function, under the slogan of "unity between theory and practice", had an important side effect on it. Theorizations, innovations, and experiments lost their innocence: any theoretical heresy could be accused of endangering the state politics, and the propagandist became as responsible as any policy maker. Unexpectedly, this vision acted in an inhibitory manner on ideologists and propagandists. Always risking to be accused of "deviationism", they turned reluctant when it came to innovate their discourse and to improve the methods of communication. The repetition, up to saturation, of some messages and/or the use of some general sentences with no meaning was not only the result of a strategy, but also the symptom of self-censorship, as most of the propagandists would have rather reiterated phrases which they were sure to be orthodox enough, politically correct, or phrases that communicated nothing and involved no responsibility.

Fixing propaganda in a pattern of authoritarian communication lays, undoubtedly, with its association to terror. Not accidentally, quite many Sovietologists underlined this association¹. Having at hand a repressive apparatus mythologized as almighty, the Stalinist regime and its copies from Eastern Europe did not waste much time and energy in any attempt to attract popular adhesion in some more refined manner. Propaganda was not, for most of the history of communism, but a prolongation of terror, a spokesman of the police state, an expression of unlimited violence and of arbitrariness. The communist regimes communicated in an authoritarian, arrogant way, they used blunt, unattractive, unintelligible, inept formulas, and they could afford to spread flagrant untruths, underlining thus their discretionary power².

The Vicious Circle of Communist Transformism

Ken Jowitt defines the political culture of the Leninist regime as an ensemble of adaptive positions set up as answers to the formal definitions³. For decades, very

¹ See, for instance, Carl J. FRIEDRICH, Zbigniew K. BRZEZINSKI, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, Frederick A. Praeger, New York, Washington, London, 1965, and Raymond ARON, *Democrație și totalitarism*, Rom. transl. S. Ceaușu, ALL Educational, București, 2001.

² Françoise THOM, *Limba de lemn*, cit., pp. 132-135.

³ Ken JOWITT, *New World Disorder. The Leninist Extinction*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1992, p. 55.

few things were innovated in the field of propaganda, mostly in terms of accent and positioning in different registers the same type of discourse. The already outlined political culture remained untouched. This is a composite, heterogeneous political culture, made of many "tough" ideas and values, ways of thinking and routinized actions, common memories, also of many unclear, contradictory, ambivalent ideas, which led to confrontations in the name of orthodoxy, to successive detachments and restorations, as well as to false innovations. With each and every major regime change, the new leader turned his eyes back the early days of the revolution and the puzzling third decade, which, due to the poor institutionalization of communism, of the political and theoretical continuous confrontations, and the mood generated by a somewhat intellectual freedom, allowed the extraction of different "orthodox truths", through which the conditions of possibility offered by the Marxist-Leninist discourse were exploited. The resulting ideological chaos is to explain on the one hand the dynamics of the communist regime and, on the other hand, the limited character of this dynamics, the small importance of policy changes, even at times when the reform of the system was desired, like, for instance, under Gorbachev.

The overestimated role of propaganda and its apparatus was one of the most important legacies of Stalin. Consequently, his successors, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev, knew how to exploit it in an unexpected way: as the idea of an almighty propaganda became natural, this had to be blamed for most of the system faults, it deserved to be criticized and reconsidered when something, anything, did not work well. Until the collapse of the system, the communist discourse could criticize the ineffectiveness of the propaganda apparatus and urge its revision.

Khrushchev thought that measures such as a partial de-ideologization of the message, the orientation towards practical issues, moving from confrontation to dialogue, decentralizing some of the local level decisions, encouraging debates and initiatives, rendering organization more flexible and tolerating a certain autonomy represented the solution. Brezhnev took advantage of the fact that the communist elite and bureaucracy met only partially the requirements of Khrushchev's program, thus asking for a general return to the Stalinist propagandistic model. Just like Khrushchev, Brezhnev asked for a return to the original sources of Marxism-Leninism and to a more pronounced democratization. Yet, unlike his predecessor, he understood by this the re-ideologization of the message, which was invested with more and more "scientific" value, the recentralization of decisions (in the name of the Leninist "democratic centralism") and the strengthening of party control (in the name of its vanguard role) on the "democratic" organizations where debates were taking place. Brezhnev's neo-Stalinist policy had the well-known stagnant effect, and propaganda became, more than ever, ritualistic, mechanical, dogmatic, formal, and emptied of any content. An interesting thing is that, as a result of the already traditional criticisms against the ineffectiveness of the propaganda apparatus, in the 1960s and 1970s psycho-sociological researches were allowed to notice and correct the defaults of propaganda. It was the first time that the communist leaders tacitly acknowledged that the society might have a different face than the one apodictically described by ideology. However, though researches offered relevant results, they had a minimal impact, as the communist elite could not accept the conclusions and re-evaluations. Something important, however, changed under Brezhnev. If under Stalin terror and propaganda were seen as complementary, subsequently, as repression was losing weight in the prescriptions of the communist power, propaganda received a more important role in the social control. In practice, it occurred by the intensive

and extensive utilization of the convoluted organization formulas of the propaganda apparatus¹.

The novelty brought by Gorbachev consisted less in new methods and more in the determination to take seriously and to "revitalize" some of the ideas circulated, yet hardly put into practice, by his predecessors. The magic term of "glasnost" has a non-communist, 19th century "prehistory", being a watchword for the reformist movement of the 1850-1860; it was latter on used by Lenin, and in 1977 it was included in the Constitution by Brezhnev himself as a principle of action in the party-society relation. But the idea had political effects and social impact only under Gorbachev². Other terms preferred by the reformatory soviet leader – "democratization", "debate", "legality", "peace", etc. – were widely used by Stalin and resuscitated by Khrushchev and Brezhnev. The relaxation, opening, decentralization and democratization practiced by Gorbachev were mainly reproducing the Khrushchev rhetoric and generally used the organization equipment always at the party's disposal.

The more active "participation" in the events patronized by the party had always been the leaders' wish, but Gorbachev knew how to better stimulate it. The political target was not very different either: through "participation" and "democratization", Gorbachev enacted, just like Stalin, Khrushchev, Mao or Ceaușescu, a "the people against the elite" like scenario, trying to counterbalance the power of the nomenclature by invoking and convoking the society, that the leader was more and more often claiming to be representative of, directly, without the party's intercession³. The examples might go on, but the conclusion is the same: the propaganda repertory and the communication techniques were not very different from the initial ones, and that happened because Gorbachev's relaxation was not, like the previous ones, deprived of ambiguities. Operating changes in the stylistics of the relation with the society, the Soviet leader wanted to make a tactical maneuver, to pacify and attract the population, but not to make a strategic decision meant to re-evaluate the relations between party and society. Things got a radically reformist turn, not necessarily because this was Gorbachev's intention, but because old measures were applied in a new context, which gave them a different sonority.

The same happened in the post-totalitarian states of the communist bloc. The 1980s found the communist regimes in Eastern Europe in a sever crisis of legitimacy. A sociological study, based on interviews with a representative number of East Europeans, who traveled in the West in three periods (1975/76, 1979/80 and 1984/85), indicated for the mid 1980s an accentuated decline of popular support for the communist authorities in all five states it dealt with (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria). According to this study, in Poland and Romania one could best see the negative tendency in evaluating the achievements of the communist regimes⁴. In the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, the dramatic decline of

¹ David Wedgood BENN, *Persuasion and Soviet Politics*, cit., pp. 65 sqq; Roger E. KANET, "The Rise and Fall of the All-People State: Recent Changes in the Soviet Theory of State", *Soviet Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, July 1968, pp. 81-93; Michel HELLER, *Soixante-dix ans qui ébranlèrent le monde. Histoire politique de l'Union Soviétique*, Calman-Lévy, Paris, 1988, *passim*.

² Robert C. TUCKER, *Political Culture and Leadership in Soviet Russia...cit.*, p. 145.

³ Françoise THOM, *Sfârșiturile comunismului*, Rom. transl. Gabriela Gavril, Polirom, Iași, 1996, pp. 60-72, *passim*.

⁴ The polls, made by different western institutes on Radio Free Europe's order, are gathered in *Radio Free Europe Area Audience and Opinion Research, Political Legitimacy in Eastern Europe*:

legitimacy of the communist regimes corresponded with their evolution towards the post-totalitarian models, characterized by the bureaucratization of the political life, the reduction of repression, the ritualization of ideology and the tolerance of isolated resistances and of some autonomous forms of organization¹. Facing an obvious political, economic and moral crisis, the communist authorities admitted gradually the need for changes, decreasing, at the same time, the pressure on society. What disappeared from the communist discourse was the pretension to infallibility and the messianic pathos, as well as the mobilizing rhetoric by which the population was requested to make sacrifices and unconditional adhesions in the name of the supreme goal that communism was. On the other hand, society reconverted its discontent into apathy. Regardless of the official discourse, both the communist elite and the society abandoned the public virtues, within a real social contract, tacit but deep, searching to solve their private interests by participating in informal networks, which eventually doubled and paralyzed the formal circuits².

To overstep this situation, marked by a mix of stagnation, crisis feeling and apathy, the post-totalitarian communist regimes regarded popular participation as a solution³. Yet, in the new domestic and international context of the 1980s, participation could no longer be obtained by the "traditional" means of mechanical mobilization and coercion. So that, for the first time, the "issue of legitimacy becomes public"⁴, as the authorities felt the need to justify their actions, to pay more attention to the population's demands and to try to communicate, to debate, and to attract support through persuasive methods.

Mikhail Gorbachev's "glasnost" policy is the most famous facet of this tactical adaptation of the system, which can be translated by the grasp of several key-words such as "democratization", "restructuring", "opening", "flexibility", "dialogue", "debate", "receptivity", "transparency", "initiative", "co-interest", etc.⁵. From a practical standpoint, the Gorbachev period is first of all characterized by an intense resort to the means of mass communication, in order to create the impression of motion, of activity and change⁶.

A Comparative Study, March 1987, Table 6, p. 18; the data were processed and interpreted by Daniel N. NELSON, "The Rise of Public Legitimation in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe", in Sabrina Petra RAMET (ed.), *Adaptation and Transformation in Communist and Post-Communist Systems*, Westview Press, Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford, 1992, pp. 24-27.

¹ The characteristics of the post-totalitarian regimes were described by Juan J. LINZ, Alfred STEPAN in *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation. Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1996.

² Kazimierz Z. POZNANSKI, "Reconsiderând tranziția", Rom. transl., *Polis*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1998, pp. 112-126; George SCHÖPFLIN, "Corruption, Informalism, Irregularity in Eastern Europe: A Political Analysis", *Südosteuropa*, vol. 7-8, 1984, pp. 389-401.

³ Adrian POP, *Tentația tranziției. O istorie a prăbușirii comunismului în Europa de Est*, Editura Corint, București, 2002, p. 342.

⁴ Daniel N. NELSON, "The Rise of Public Legitimation", cit., p. 15.

⁵ Gerd RUGE, *Mihail Gorbaciov*, Rom. transl. Honoria Pohrib and Magdalena Georgescu, Editura Doina, București, 1993, pp. 207-220; Mihail GORBACIOV, *Memorii*, Rom. transl. Radu Pontbriant, Nemira, București, 1994, *passim*.

⁶ Michel HELLER, *Soixante-dix ans qui ébranlèrent le monde...cit.*, p. 144; Owen V. JOHNSON, "The Press of Change: Mass Communications in Late Communist Societies", in Sabrina Petra RAMET, *Adaptation and Transformation...cit.*, pp. 209-239.

As Leslie Holmes noticed when inventorying ten techniques of legitimization used by the communist regimes, the most utilized method in the 1980s was a legal-rational one. After a period when the authorities' abuses, the randomness of political decisions and the teleological exorcisations exceeded the population, the communist parties tried to endow the public life with a character of predictability and rationality, in order to pacify the society. The utopian, revolutionary notes of the discourse were downgraded; the invocation of the party's vanguard and of the leaders' charisma is softened; the abstract references to the Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy or to foreign politics took a back seat; the nationalist appeal, seen as revolte, was carefully administered; the same concern could be noticed in the utilization of the eudemonic legitimacy (by which the communist party introduced itself as a provider of benefits for the population), given that the economic reform had not succeed and the standard of life dramatically diminished in the 1980s¹. In the ninth decade, the communist parties once self-proclaimed almighty, appeared now as limited, whose role was not that of controlling and mobilizing the whole society any more, but to guide and regulate public life.

In this context, Romania was a distinct case, together with the GDR and Bulgaria, illustrating a tragic freezing in the same project. The regime patronized by Nicolae Ceaușescu degenerated starting with the second half of the 1970s towards an extreme form of patrimonialism, characterized by the personalization and the radical concentration of power, by the cult of personality, by dynastic temptations and nepotism, favoritism and corruption, by unpredictability and arbitrariness of decisions, by the uncertainty of positions, by the blurring of the separation lines between party and state, between private and public spheres. In the name of the Party-State, the leader was unconditionally valuing the ideology and asking for the application, through extensive mobilization of the society, through ample strategies of inclusion, through sophisticated mechanisms of control, through radical voluntarism, through the exorcisation of sacrifice and the incitation of pathos, of the messianic notes in the discourse². Confronted with the same political, economic and moral crisis as the rest of its "mates", Ceaușescu's Romania answered by withdrawing on the coordinates of a residual and dogmatic Leninism-Stalinism. Although the context was dramatically changing, the Romanian leader did not accept to modify his rhetoric and to adapt his policies, taking refuge into a comforting "orthodox" discourse and shaping reality according to it. While, in the rest of socialist countries the authorities were softening their pressure on the society and tried to attract voluntary support, the Romanian communist leader became even more persistent in his voluntarism, using the cult of personality in the field of social control, requesting a large scale mobilization and forging most of the strident themes that elsewhere had been left behind³.

¹ Leslie HOLMES, *Post-Communism. An Introduction*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 42-58.

² Ronald H. LINDEN, "Socialist Patrimonialism and the Global Economy: the Case of Romania", *International Organization*, vol. 40, no. 2, 1986, pp. 346-380. Juan J. LINZ and Alfred STEPAN use, speaking about Ceaușescu' patrimonialism, a very fortunate term – "sultanism"; as for the rest, their description of the regime is just, see *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation...cit.*, pp. 344-357. See also H.E. CHEHABI, Juan J. LINZ, "A Theory of Sultanism", in IDEM (eds.), *Sultanistic Regimes*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore & London, 1998, pp. 3-48.

³ Vladimir TISMĂNEANU, *Stalinism pentru eternitate. O istorie politică a comunismului românesc*, Rom. transl. Cristina and Dragoș Petrescu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2005.

Conclusions

It is hard to conclude at the end of such a long appraisal. A first conclusion, anyway, that implicitly results from the present approach is that ideas count. The philosophical, scientific and political universe in which the "classics" of communism grew played an essential part in the prefiguration of the communist political culture. Culture, in its wide meaning, obviously fulfilled a performing function in the foundation of the communist state. The presumptions of communist ideologists about human nature, state and society, influenced by the theories of the late 19th early 20th century, marked the propagandistic model institutionalized after 1917. The inclusion of these theories in the communist ethos was generally made strict by subordination to ideology, but what is often ignored is that between ideology and the different scientific, philosophical and organizational theories jammed in the communist blender there was a mutual strengthening. The regime borrowed from them epistemic authority, providing in exchange deontic authority. The communist "truths" were forged by this kind of alloys.

The "defaults" of propaganda as we perceive them today represented, in fact, the coordinates of an authoritarian formula of relating to society, officially accepted and ideologically gratified. Communism extracted from the scientific theories and cultural models it rummaged through, those elements that stated its pre-eminence in relation to the society it dominated. The communist regime dissimulated in the act of communication the much more intense effort to control and to discipline the individuals upon whom it extended its ideological aura. The mass communication was meant to defeat not to convince, to apodictically state and not to prove, to impose and not to seduce. The aggressiveness, the lack of subtlety and inadaptability were all ensuing. The communist authorities looked for a persuasive way of relating to society only in the crisis phase, and then, no domestic (political, ideological and cultural) resources were found for a new formula of communication and relation to the social environment they directed. The non-democratic vocation of communism was inscribed in its very cultural genealogy.